

THE RAJAS AND NAWABS OF BENGAL

1911-1919

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by

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ABSTRACT

It is attempted in this thesis to analyse the aspirations, attitudes and activities of the rajas and nawabs during the second decade of the twentieth century. It was the decade which experienced the effects of the Morley-Minto reforms on the one hand and the Delhi Darbar proclamations on the other. Within this political framework the functions of these territorial magnates are examined.

At the outset the question whether the 'nobles' formed a distinct social group which could be called a nobility or, as an alternative, could be identified as a status group, is analysed. Simultaneously, the secondary question of how far their ideology was a reflection of their social position is examined. The next issue discussed is their claim to be the 'natural leaders' of the province. A 'natural leader' would find it impossible to justify his claim without some basic links of communication with the local people. What were the socio-economic links which had evolved over the centuries and which made it possible for them to influence a large section of the population? That is the theme of the second chapter. Having examined these channels of influence, it is assessed in the following chapter how far such links provided them with the basis for acting as intermediaries in public affairs through political associations and as eminent individuals, and how far their attitudes and aspirations differed from those of the 'nationalists' of the time. Their capacity to provide an alternative indigenous leadership and their

distinctive approach to political issues was put to the test by the framers of the 1909 reforms in the enlarged Executive and Legislative Councils. Their efforts to become an effective counterpoise to the 'nationalists' in the Councils is the question analysed in the fourth chapter. Alongside formalised politics a series of inter-connected extra-constitutional movements - Congress, Swadeshi, Terrorist, Muslim separatist - dominated the contemporary Bengal scene. The thesis is concluded with an examination of their attitude and activities in relation to these movements. Having examined their activities from social, economic and political viewpoints, it is ultimately attempted in the thesis to draw conclusions regarding their functions and effectiveness in Bengal during the decade under review.

ABBREVIATIONS.

Aitchison:	C.U.Aitchison: <u>Collection of Treaties, Engagements &amp; Sanads.</u>
A.I.M.L.:	<u>All India Muslim League Proceedings.</u>
A.S.P.J.:	<u>Asiatic Society of Pakistan Journal.</u>
B.A.P.:	<u>Bengal Appointment Proceedings.</u>
B.B.Majumdar:	B.B.Majumdar: <u>Indian Political Associations and Reforms of Legislature.</u>
B.D.G.:	<u>Bengal District Gazetteers.</u>
Bengal Zamindars:	R.V.Rao: <u>Life &amp; Work of Bengal Zamindars.</u>
B.F.P.:	<u>Bengal Financial Proceedings.</u>
B.G.P.:	<u>Bengal General Proceedings.</u>
B.I.A.:	ed.P.N.Singh-Roy: <u>Chronicle of British Indian Association.</u>
B.J.P.:	<u>Bengal Judicial Proceedings.</u>
B.L.P.:	<u>Bengal Legislative Proceedings.</u>
B.P.P.:	<u>Bengal Political Proceedings.</u>
B.P. & P.:	<u>Bengal Past &amp; Present.</u>
B.R.P.:	<u>Bengal Revenue Proceedings.</u>
B.R.S.J.:	<u>Bihar Research Society Journal.</u>
Chiefs, Nobles & Zamindars:	A.Vadevelu: <u>Ruling Chiefs, Nobles &amp; Zamindars of India.</u>
Chiefs, Rajas & Zamindars:	L.N.Ghose: <u>Modern History of Indian Chiefs, Rajas &amp; Zamindars.</u>

Correspondence S.S.:	Chelmsford: <u>Correspondence with Secretary of State.</u>
C.P.I.:	Hardinge: <u>Correspondence with Persons in India.</u>
C.R.:	<u>Calcutta Review.</u>
C.R.P.:	<u>Crown Representative Papers.</u>
Debrett:	ed.F.J.Hankinson: <u>Debrett's Peerage.</u>
E.B.D.G.:	<u>Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers.</u>
E.L.:	<u>Educational Letters from India.</u>
F.L.:	<u>Financial Letters from India.</u>
G.B.R.:	<u>Goal of British Rule in India.</u>
G.G.L.L.:	<u>Governor-General's Legislative Letters.</u>
G.I.F.D.P.:	<u>Government of India Foreign Department Proceedings.</u>
G.I.F & P.D.P.:	<u>Government of India Foreign &amp; Political Department Proceedings.</u>
Golden Book:	R.Lethbridge: <u>Golden Book of India.</u>
Governors Letters:	Austin Chamberlain: <u>Letters from the Governors of Bengal.</u>
I.B.D.:	C.H.Rao: <u>Indian Biographical Dictionary.</u>
I.N.C.R.:	<u>Indian National Congress Report.</u>
Ind.Constit.Ref.:	<u>Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms (Montagu-Chelmsford).</u>
Indian Princess:	Sunity Devee: <u>Autobiography of an Indian Princess.</u>
Ind.N.P.:	<u>Report on Indian Newspapers from Bengal.</u>
Ind.N.P. & Per.:	<u>Report on Indian Newspapers &amp; Periodicals from Bengal.</u>
Ind.owned Eng.N.P.:	<u>Report on Indian owned English Newspapers from Bengal.</u>

I.S.A.R.:	<u>Indian States Administrative Reports.</u>
J.A.S.:	<u>Journal of Asian Studies.</u>
J.H.Broomfield:	J.H.Broomfield: <u>Elite Conflict in a Plural Society.</u>
J. & P.D.:	<u>Judicial &amp; Public Despatches to India.</u>
J. & P.D.P.:	<u>Judicial &amp; Public Departmental Papers.</u>
L.L.:	<u>Legislative Letters from India.</u>
L.R.C.:	<u>Report Land Revenue Commission 1938.</u>
L & T(India):	Chelmsford: <u>Letters &amp; Telegrams (India).</u>
L & T.K.:	Hardinge: <u>Letters &amp; Telegrams from the King.</u>
M & S.L.:	<u>Medical &amp; Sanitary Letters from India.</u>
Nat.N.P.:	<u>Report on Native Newspapers from Bengal.</u>
Nat.owned Eng.N.P.:	<u>Report on Native owned English Newspapers from Bengal.</u>
P.L.:	<u>Public Letters from India.</u>
Police L.:	<u>Police Letters from India.</u>
Po.L.:	<u>Political Letters from India.</u>
R.L.:	<u>Revenue Letters from India.</u>
R & S.D.P.:	<u>Revenue &amp; Statistics Departmental Papers.</u>
S.N.Banerjea:	S.N.Banerjea: <u>A Nation in Making.</u>
Tours:	<u>Tours of Carmichael.</u>
U.P.H.S.J.:	<u>U.P.Historical Society Journal.</u>
Whos Who:	ed.Bhargava: <u>Whos Who in India 1911.</u>
Whos Who (D.S.)	ed.Bhargava: <u>Whos Who in India (Durbar Supplement).</u>

## INTRODUCTION

It is commonly believed that the rajas and nawabs of India were the pampered creatures of the British. They ignored all the traditional responsibilities that their titles implied.<sup>1</sup> Unlike their predecessors of the pre-British era, who carried out their duties with pride and dignity, they spent their time indulging in expensive hobbies like shooting tigers, playing polo and watching the performances of decorative dancing girls. Extreme extravagance was noted in the cases of rajas and nawabs who squandered away small fortunes on pleasures of the flesh and hedonistic entertainments. Such futile pursuits not only sapped their vitality but converted them into an unwelcome burden on the impoverished peasantry whose labour financed their conspicuous follies. The rajas' and nawabs' anti-social behaviour was supplemented by their habit of sending their children abroad for an education which 'denationalised' them, making them incapable of appreciating the needs and requirements of the Indian public, aggravating the people's dislike for them even further. Moreover, they were primarily absentee proprietors who lived in indolence, received a large unearned income and squandered them away in distant cities. Thus they had virtually become a group of 'denationalised', rent-receiving, burdensome, absentee proprietors of huge properties, thoroughly disliked by the people in general. All the above factors put together tarnished their reputation and lost them the respect and support of the masses, over whom they held titular sway,

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1. Details of pre-British zamindars' social functions in Chapter II and political functions in Chapter III.

making it obligatory on independent India to abolish the system once and for all. Such are the usual arguments put forward by the advocates of their abolition and accepted as valid by many. But their success in the polls in post-Independence India, despite their deprivation, shows the contrary.

Economically the ex-landholders no longer rank with the richest in the country and politically they have no special standing. Explanations for the unexpected and positive support they received from the local inhabitants must lie elsewhere. It would be facetious to suggest that the accusations against their behaviour were totally fabricated by interested parties in an attempt to belittle them in the eyes of the public. It is more likely that the explanation lies in the fact that, in spite of their individual shortcomings, the institution of hereditary 'noblemen' satisfied certain human needs. At a time when the sub-continent is involved in economic and social problems of great severity, this possibility has significance. Moreover, an examination of the activities of the rajas and nawabs, who were economically and socially at the apex of the social pyramid and proprietors of a large portion of rural India, would help complete the picture of socio-political life in the first half of the twentieth century. The purpose of the thesis is not to suggest that the group under review should be re-installed in their old positions but to examine their functions - social, political and economic.

For convenience of study the province of Bengal has been selected as the field of research. In that province

it was possible to find tributary states with semi-independent status, descendants of Mughal viceroys who once held supreme power, the biggest zamindari in British India, tribal rajas who traced their ancestry back to pre-British days, rajas and nawabs created by the new regime, hereditary rajas and nawabs, rajas and nawabs who required to be re-installed by the paramount power at every succession, landholders who were governed by the law of primogeniture, and proprietors of estates whose inheritance was sub-divided time and again. In other words a cross section of all the different types of rajas and nawabs that existed in the Indian Empire. Moreover, till 1911 it was the vice-regal seat of authority making it the focal point of British interests. Furthermore, it was the province where the foundation of modern India was laid in the nineteenth century. Last but not least it was, and is till today, the most troubled section of the sub-continent.

Having focused attention on Bengal the years between the Delhi Durbar (1911) and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (1919) appeared to be the most appropriate period for study. The coronation of a sovereign on Indian soil brought the so-called Indian noblemen to the limelight. It became necessary to formalise their nebulous hierarchy in some such way as to give the group a definite shape. Moreover, at the coronation the King made a royal proclamation by which Bihar, Orissa, Chota-Nagpur and Assam were detached from the Presidency, leaving Bengal proper a reasonably homogenous province. The rearrangement of boundaries also ensured that the Indian non-official members of the Governor's



Legislative Council would be representatives of Bengal only, removing the possibility of their ever having to face a situation in which they were in the minority against the combined strength of Biharis, Oriyas and Assamese. It was also the decade following the Morley-Minto reforms when much reliance was vested in the large landholders as a check upon discontent. With the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms the emphasis shifted once and for all from the large landholders to the nationalists.

The socio-political forces affecting the Bengali people during the early decades of the twentieth century evolved gradually over the preceding century. The nineteenth century could be considered the transitional period when Bengal shed her traditional way of life and adopted modern ways. In the annals of Indian history, the nineteenth century occupies a unique position. Modern India evolved out of the nineteenth century, and Bengal was the centre of this awakening.<sup>1</sup>

Much scholarly work has been done on the socio-political history of Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But it is impossible to assess the functions, efforts and attitudes of the rajas and nawabs. The most striking shortcoming is the relative silence concerning the activities of the Bengali Muslims, especially when we find that the Morley-Minto scheme considered them competent enough to act, along with the landholders, as a counterpoise to the nationalists. The leadership of the Muslims was vested in the Dacca Nawab's family and its associates. Moreover, one is left perplexed not only by the silence concerning the Muslim nawabs but also by the

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1. K.S.Bose: Indian Awakening in Bengal, p.iii

conflicting statements made regarding the rajas and nawabs as a whole.

From the journals of the early nineteenth century we get a confused picture of the socio-religious condition of Calcutta. On the one hand we find lavish and exuberant sacrificial rites, pretentious religious festivals and gala occasions such as important pujas and family ceremonies. The big zamindars of the time took the lead in such conspicuous consumption. It is said that many of them spent thousands of rupees on occasions such as the 'marriage' of their pets. On the other hand we are made aware of the fact that numerous big zamindars were at the very forefront of the movements that initiated the awakening of Bengal. Amongst the members of the Atmiya Sabha who regularly attended the meetings were Dwarkanath Tagore of Jorasanko, Prassanna Kumar Tagore of Puthuriaghata, Kalinath and Baikunthanath Munshi of Taki, Kailsankar Ghosal of Bhukailash, Brindaban Mitra, and Ananda Prosad Banerji of Telinapara. Amongst others it was this society of men that nudged Bengal into cultivating an outward outlook and pushed it into the modern age. Fearing that they might lead Bengal into an excessive process of westernization the orthodox community organised itself in defence of Hindu religion and practices under the patronage of Radhakanta Deb of Sovabazar. It must not be misconstrued that the orthodox opposition comprised reactionary elements who were opposed to social progress.

Radhakanta Deb was in favour of western education, women's education and medical education. He supported the Temperance Society. He was a benefactor of the Hindu College, a member

of the School Book Society, and one of the Secretaries of the School Society. In his memorial service it was appropriately remarked that compared to his contemporaries he was not behind "but in advance of his equals in age". The intent of the opposition group was not to obstruct social progress but to preserve the Hindu religion.<sup>1</sup>

One may wonder which type of zamindar - the wastral or the social leader - was the norm. It does seem that a large number of them were active participants in the socio-religious life of the province and helped activate the forces that created modern Bengal.

By the second half of the century the nationalists emerged as a prominent force who manifested their capabilities in organised associations such as the Congress and the Indian Association. Their prestige was based on education and personal merit rather than on hereditary landholdings as in the case of the previous group. Since the nationalists came to the forefront the historians have tended to brush aside the doings of the rajas and nawabs and other big zamindars as insignificant. Although it was acknowledged that the National Mohammadan Association was the only Muslim organisation worth its name and that the British Indian Association was still serving a useful purpose both are summarily set aside on the ground that they were associations of aristocrats and not in keeping with the aspirations of the time.<sup>2</sup> The unconscious insinuation apparently is that they were bodies of big zamindars and concentrated their efforts on safe-guarding zamindari vested interests only.

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1. Ibid, pp. 7,13,34,36

2. Ibid, pp. 173,177

How much truth there is in the above suggestion requires a second look. A closer scrutiny of the British Indian Association reveals that the Aristocrats so referred to did not consist exclusively of the big zamindars. More accurately it was the first organised body of Indians known for their "wealth, social position and education". Amongst the members there were "representatives of the most important interests, whether territorial, commercial or professional".<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely that a society comprising commercial and professional interests as much as territorial interests would concentrate solely on zamindari problems. Accepting that as a logical hypothesis it would appear that the senior zamindars of the province were not only active in socio-religious questions but also members and leaders of prominent political associations of the time.

Moreover, we are aware that they were the major landlords in the areas under permanent settlement and helped collect the Government's revenue. At times individuals were created honorary magistrates and were associated with the machinery of law enforcement. Moreover, they were the unofficial local executives in the work of the Government and the coadjutors of the official agents. In a rural hierarchy founded on deference, the role of these local landlords could be pivotal. Their own and their family's influence ramified far and wide.<sup>2</sup>

Educational activities were one certain link between the local people and the local zamindar. The

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1. B.B.Misra: Indian middle Classes, p.344
  2. Anil Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism, pp.10,11,141

richer landowning classes played a vital role in the growth of education in Bengal by diverting a portion of their zamindari funds to the foundation and maintenance of schools. The educational enthusiasm of Joy Kissen Mukherjee of Uttarpura was proverbial in the last century. It was almost a convention among zamindars to establish English schools on their zamindaris. The zamindars of Taki, Janai, Burdwan and Andul had gained widespread reputation for their educational enterprises. It should not be thought that these educational institutions were constructed for the benefit of their own children and relatives. The Hunter Commission of 1885 was unable to establish such a connection. Nor do the later reports establish it. On the contrary, Rajendralal Mitra, the noted Indologist, and Mahendralal Sarkar, the pioneer organiser of scientific studies in India, asserted that the richer landowning classes were unlikely to be very anxious to give their own children a formal education. Formal education was looked for as a means of livelihood and those who had to earn their own bread applied themselves to it. The rich, who had no such incentive, ignored the prospect.<sup>1</sup> That part of their income which they spent on education was applied to spread education amongst the local people for whom it was of vocational importance.

Apart from such direct benefits, at times their activities also helped the local inhabitants indirectly. For example, at the Sanskrit tolis the pandits were required to teach the pupils gratuitously and provide them with food, clothing and lodging during their stay.

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1. Pradip Sinha: Nineteenth Century Bengal, pp.36,41,42.

The pandits themselves were in turn remunerated by presents received during the religious festivals from the neighbouring zamindars.<sup>1</sup> Hence we find that the system indirectly provided sustenance for the priest-teachers who not only spread education and trained some young for a future livelihood but also supported their pupils during their years at the tols. It automatically follows that their parents and guardians derived indirect benefits as they were relieved from providing for the youngsters during that time.

By the twentieth century the existence of the Muslim leadership could not be ignored. The partition of Bengal thrust them into the limelight. The Nawab of Dacca was the community's most influential figure. He and his associates instilled a new direction into Bengal politics. Even after the reunification of the province his place in Muslim politics continued to be of prime importance. It was the policy formulated by him that remained the programme of a large section of the community for a considerable time under the triumvirate leadership of the Nawab, Nawab Shamsul Huda and Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury. Their policy made it possible for the Bengali Muslims to avoid the danger of losing their identity and becoming merged with the Hindu dominated Congress movement. Till his death the Nawab of Dacca continued to be a counterpoise to the rising influence of the nationalist leaders, continued to perform the task of unofficial advisor on Muslim problems for the Government, and continued to exert his influence effectively to keep the new element of angry young Muslims within reasonable bounds.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid, pp. 46,47.

2. J.H.Broomfield, p. 50,51.

After the Nawab's demise the Bengal Muslims came very close to losing their exclusiveness when the nationalist leadership compromised and joined hands with the Indian National Congress in 1916. Fortunately for them one man stood adamantly against that tendency which could have cost the community all the advantages it had gained in the last ten years. After two years of experiment the Bengal Muslims began looking for a leader who would not compromise, who could put forward communalism before all else in the battle about to be fought over Muslim legislative representation. The man who supplied the need was Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, this picture of the activities of the nawabs in early twentieth century Muslim politics becomes confused when it is extended to the provincial level. At this point the rajas and nawabs as a body become bracketted with the bhadralok status group. The bhadralok elite is readily identifiable by their rigidly maintained distinction between bhadra and abhadra. The bhadralok abstained from all manual labour and looked with condescension on all manual occupations. To avoid the possibility of having to perform abhadra tasks English education was utilised to find bhadra vocations. Education itself became the hallmark of bhadralok status. The ideal was generally accepted. The school became the one gate to the society of the bhadralok. But we are already aware that this was not so in the case of the richer land-owning classes. Just as the bhadralok despised manual

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1. Ibid, p. 125

occupations, so the big zamindars despised any service which was a means of livelihood.

Moreover, a glance at the legislative politics of the time suggests that their attitude and efforts were distinct from those of the bhadralok elite led by Surendranath Banerjea. Broomfield states that the Maharaja of Burdwan was the leader of the 'great Zamindars' implying that they did not follow the lead of Banerjea. They did not comply with the boycott call during the 1909 elections and opposed and defeated the Banerjea group in the 1912 elections. The Maharaja of Nashipur was elected to the Viceroy's Legislative Council not by the Indian non-officials but because of the backing of the European members and the large landholders, who differed from the bhadralok elite in their political approach.<sup>1</sup> Hence they should not be bracketted with them but should be treated as a separate group. Although they may have been superseded by the bhadralok elite in the political field, the fact that emerges from the writings on twentieth century Bengal is that the rajas and nawabs were just as active on this plane as their predecessors in the nineteenth century.

The rajas and nawabs of pre-Independent Bengal were in no way indolent creatures of the British, forever seeped in hedonistic pleasures. From various sources it is possible to gain some slight impression of what functions the institution of hereditary "noblemen" performed in Bengal society. Pradip Sinha writes, "Studies in the social history of Bengal in the 19th. century have

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1. Ibid, pp. 6,8,48,59



a general tendency to emphasise cultural, educational and religious movements, and social legislation. An excessive emphasis on urban phenomena in such studies results in the almost total exclusion of rural society from the picture."<sup>1</sup> With slight variations the same tendency is noticeable in historical writings about the early twentieth century. Yet it is a well known fact that Bengal, like any other province of India, is predominantly rural. A large section of that rural environment was physically owned by the rajas and the nawabs. Even if one were to accept the supposition that they were primarily absentee proprietors the fact that possession was in their hands would suggest that their fundamental functions, whether direct or indirect, lay beyond the limits of the metropolis of Calcutta. Such being the case the rajas and nawabs have been by-passed as practically non-existent.

To provide an answer to the question whether the institution of hereditary "noblemen" served any significant function in pre-Independent Bengal three different elements have been considered - social, political and economic. Although the period chosen is from 1911 to 1919, it is impossible to define this institution without going as far back as the period of Mughal decline, and tracing their gradual development to the twentieth century. Similarly it is necessary to examine the latter decades of the nineteenth century to assess the relationship between the political associations dominated by the "noblemen" and the emerging nationalist leaders respectively. To understand their attitude towards the Indian

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1. P. Sinha: op.cit., p.3.

National Congress and the Muslims' political awakening in Bengal it is essential to look into their reaction to the terrorist and swadeshi movements so closely interwoven with the former and their activities in the defunct province of Eastern Bengal and Assam which gave an impetus to the latter. This forces one to retreat at least to the partition. Despite the necessity to go beyond our set limits the nucleus remains the eight years under review. The overstepping is only carried out to clarify their activities and attitudes during the time in question. Moreover, as the rural community changes at a much slower pace than the urban society it is not wrong to maintain that what transpired a few decades before or after was not fundamentally different from what transpired in the second decade of the century.

To examine its functions it is necessary at the very outset to define the group under review. Previous works use the terms nobles and notables, aristocrats, large landholders and even bhadralok interchangeably in an indiscriminate manner. It is impossible to differentiate the rajas and nawabs from the other personalities as they have been either ignored as nonentities or bracketted together with others in an arbitrary fashion. Doubtless the reason for such a practice can once more be traced to the fact that the focal point of most previous works has primarily been the metropolis of Calcutta where the differences tended to submerge below the political and commercial life of the city. In the Legislative Council the Raja of Kakina, the representative of the Rajshahi Division District and Local Boards, and Ambica

Charan Majumdar, elected by the Dacca Municipalities, would doubtless meet on an equal footing. Similarly the Raja of Azimganj, the proprietor of the firm Mool Chand Hurrack Chand, and Sir R.N. Mitter, the owner of Burn and Company, would be involved in similar activities. But neither Ambica Charan Majumdar nor Sir R.N. Mitter would be received at Kakina or Azimgunj by the respective rajas in the same fashion, steeped in traditional customs, as they would receive one another. The reason for the difference of treatment would not be found in their political or commercial interests, nor in the fact that they were influenced by western ideas, nor that they belonged to the Calcutta aristocracy, but in the fact that the two rajas were bound together by the feeling of being fellow noblemen of the realm. The thesis opens with the examination of the historical development of the group and their behavioural patterns, privileges, prerogatives, traditional customs, etc., which differentiated them from the rest of the community and created a sense of belonging to an exclusive status group of their own. Their activities and attitudes would undoubtedly be greatly coloured by that fact. Much would be done because it would be considered correct decorum by fellow "nobles", or because their prestige as "noblemen" hung on it, or because of their inability to break away from the pattern set by their forebears. Only having understood their life style is it possible to assess their social functions in the province and their economic links with the people.

It is often asserted that the rajas and the nawabs had no significant social and economic functions. On the contrary they had lost touch with the people because of their pretentious arrogance and their only apparent economic task was to extort as much as they could from the helpless peasants cultivating on their lands.<sup>1</sup> Yet we find that not only did they themselves claim that they were the "natural leaders" of the society but that a large section of the Government officials actually acknowledged them as such. The question that arises is whether there was any truth in their claim to leadership, or was it as difficult to substantiate as the medieval monarchs' claim to a divine right to rule. Unlike the medieval sovereigns, the "nobles" claim could not be based on political superiority as they had been divested of all political authority. At the same time their claim could not be founded on the fact that they were the charismatic leaders. The former was vested in the British themselves and the latter in the nationalist leaders. The only possible basis for such a claim was that they received traditional deference from the local people. Even if the individual raja or nawab was insignificant, as long as custom allowed him to remain remote, preventing his personal capacity from being tested, he could maintain traditional authority and generate depersonalised charismatic influence over the inhabitants.

Sociologists maintain that depersonalised charisma does not last for very long unless the willingness to

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1. During the few years spent on research for this thesis the author did not come across a single scholar who maintained otherwise.

render services on the part of the followers is preserved. That can only be done by providing positive benefits to the followers which would create a sense of deference for the traditional patriarch even if the person in question was hardly ever seen. Pradip Sinha points out one such benefit by elucidating their activities in the educational field. Starting from that point the thesis continues with the examination of the "nobles" economic connections with the smaller zamindars and the under tenure-holders. This is followed by an examination of their social activities: in religious life, in caste groups, in relief work during distress caused by natural calamities, in attempts to popularise the agricultural and cottage craft products of their estates, in contributions towards the civic development of the mufassil, in medical facilities for the local people, in the commercial life of the province, and in their patronage of intellectual societies and sporting associations. Only after an analysis of their economic and social functions can the validity of their claim to natural leadership be examined.

Mere social leadership would not have induced the political authorities to rely on the rajas and nawabs for aid and advice in politics. Actual interest and competency in public affairs must have been essential qualifications. Since the Mutiny the type of politics practised was consultation with political associations and important individuals, before the enactment of any important legislation, by the Executive authority. This system was at its

height during the early decades of the century. Twentieth century history has been virtually limited to the activities of the Administration on the one hand and the Congress cum Indian Association and the All India Muslim League on the other. The fact that there were other associations in Bengal which were considered as important by the political authorities has been overlooked on the ground that they were dominated by aristocratic interests which doubtless went counter to patriotic spirit. Patriotism has been defined within the limited confines of the sub-continent. The question why Bengal's patriotic spirit should be limited to India with Delhi as the centre rather than cover a wider field with London as the pivot can only be answered by political scientists and sociologists. The thesis does not attempt to examine that question. The "nobles" accepted the latter definition as true patriotism. They maintained that Bengal would benefit more if she strove to become an equal unit within the Empire than if she remained a province within India alone. Then the political activities of the rajas and nawabs are analysed.

Because of the preconceived notion that patriotism must necessarily be confined within the limited boundaries of India, historians have tended to ignore the activities during the twentieth century of those other political associations. It seems to be assumed that if they were loyal to the imperial concept they could not be patriotic towards Bengal. The imperial concept implies subjugation

or at least subordination to the imperial power.

Whether the "nobles" actually strove to keep Bengal in subjugation or not has not been examined. Further questions for investigation are how active were their societies, how much could they influence the Government and the people, and on what type of issues did the Government rely on their judgement during the heyday of consultative politics. Furthermore, their individual eminence and dominance over political associations led to a number of rajas and nawabs being appointed as representatives in various public commissions. Whether they played any effective role in this capacity has been overlooked. This thesis contains an examination of their activities in political associations and public commissions as intermediaries in public affairs. It must also be remembered that one of the major factors that led to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms was the persistent claim of the nationalist leaders that India should be rewarded for its participation in the War. What has been left unexplained is the contribution of the rajas and nawabs to the war effort which helped the nationalists substantiate their demands.

Closely linked with their interests in public affairs were their activities within the Governor's Executive and Legislative Councils. Broomfield points out that in the Council chamber there were fundamentally two parties: the officials and Europeans on the one hand and the Indian non-officials led by Surendranath Banerjea on the other. Yet he also states that the landholders

defied the boycott call of Surendranath Banerjea and his associates during the 1909 elections. Moreover they opposed and defeated Surendranath Banerjea's group in the 1912 elections. If that is so, it is not feasible that the large landholders would also support Surendranath Banerjea's programme of continuous opposition by falling into line with the other Indian non-officials. At least the rajas and nawabs would doubtless work on their own. From that hypothesis we find that there were 24 officials and Europeans, 18 Indian non-officials and 9 rajas and nawabs in the 1913 Council and 22 officials and Europeans, 21 Indian non-officials and 7 rajas and nawabs in the 1917 Council. This suggests, therefore, that the rajas and nawabs were numerically in a position which would enable them to become the decisive factor if they consolidated themselves into a power block. An examination is made of their approach to and treatment of issues discussed within the chamber and whether they managed to hold the balance between the opposing forces by introducing conservatism and sobriety in the debates as they had been expected to do by the framers of the Morley-Minto scheme.

The thesis concludes with an examination of the rajas' and the nawabs' attitudes towards, and relationships with the Congress, the swadeshi, the terrorist, and the Muslim separatist movements. The two primary questions the final chapter deals with are whether their effort to contain the spread of terrorist activities and forestall the swadeshi movement from turning into a programme of



boycott and picketing helped Eastern India avoid turning into a bloody battlefield, and whether the efforts of the nawabs helped the Bengali Muslims to retain their identity which came so close to being lost by the compromising attitude of the Muslim nationalist leaders.

A final question is whether the nobles' efforts had any importance in the socio-political life of Bengal during the pre-Independence era, and how far their presence acted as safety valves for the rural population as a whole.

# CHAPTER I

## THE NOBLES OF BENGAL

In twentieth century British Bengal certain landholding titled notables were addressed as noblemen or nobles by the British Administration,<sup>1</sup> the existing English language press,<sup>2</sup> and the translators of Indian language newspapers in their reports forwarded to the India Office in London.<sup>3</sup> The same terms were habitually used in the various Government gazetteers of the different districts of Bengal.<sup>4</sup> Before proceeding to analyse the questions as to who were these so-called noblemen and what was their position in Bengal society, it is advisable to consider whether it is analytically justifiable to call them a nobility, or whether the term was a mere courtesy designation.

Generally speaking kingdoms known to history have been governed in two ways; either by a king and his servants, who as ministers by his grace and permission, assisted in governing the realm; or by a king and by barons who held their position not so much by favour of the ruler as by antiquity of blood and by virtue of their local power and influence.<sup>5</sup> On the eve of the British hegemony, Bengal, having become a virtually independent kingdom, manifested both these aspects. The political machinery comprised the senior hereditary administrators, official and baronial, subordinate to and linked by the paramount authority in the province. They

1. Warrant in precedence at Governor's darbars, sanads official correspondence, public speeches, etc.
2. The Englishman, The Statesman, The Bengalee, Hindoo Patriot.
3. Nat. R.P.: 1911-1916
4. Dist. Gazatteers: Bengal, Eastern Bengal, Bihar & Orissa
5. N. Machiavelli: The Prince

had the hereditary privilege of maintaining law and order, dispensing justice and, in many cases, creating new laws. Thus they individually embodied the functions of the State - executive, legislative and judicial - as defined by political scientists, within their own territories. Legal authority and hereditary succession are the two most important facets of a true nobility. Though the hereditary semblance of this nobility was retained after the transference of paramountcy, its members were systematically deprived by the British of their basic functions as the local source of all political power. It is well known that during the early twentieth century the legal authority of these descendants of Alivardi Khan's political class who survived the ravages of time was no greater than that of any other owner of agricultural estates; collecting rents from tenants and providing revenue to the Government. Hence, under no circumstances could they be designated as a true nobility in the sense in which it existed in Bangal before British domination.

With the establishment of British rule many of the institutions of British India were inevitably modelled or remoulded after parallel existing institutions in England. Such being the case it was possible that the new rulers may have replaced the old pattern of nobility in Bengal by the English model. To examine the question as to whether it was so or not in the case of the Bengal nobles, it is necessary to look into the composition of the British nobility and compare it with the indigenous group. The accepted custom in Great Britain was, and is until today, the restriction of the word noblemen to members of the peerage, and those who by courtesy bore titles in virtue

of their connection with noble families. Title holders in Britain were divided into two layers: the nobiles majores and nobiles minores. It was the former group that was ascribed as noblemen by the British. It customarily consisted of all peers from a baron upwards and inclusive; in short those with seats in the House of Lords, the hereditary counsellors of the sovereign.<sup>1</sup> Such was never the case in British Bengal. The British had carried out no major reshuffle to convert the character of the Bengal nobility to resemble that of the British peerage. Thus the term could not be applied in the British sense for any parallel body of men there.

The above negations immediately bring to mind the question in what sense, in that case, could the term be used with reference to Bengal. To come to a conclusion it is necessary at this stage to trace the evolution of the zamindari class and study the system by which Indian titles were conferred and recognised by the British, and see if they could be classified accordingly into categories in the manner of the British peerage.

The British, while in the process of becoming an Indian power, encountered a sub-continental empire of a shadowy emperor in many ways similar to the titular sovereign of Britain. But, unlike Britain, which had a regulated nobility with specific privileges and prerogatives in keeping with hierarchical seniority, the Indian emperor presided over a nebulous nobility with no systematic hierarchy. With the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the Mughal Empire had rapidly fragmented into numerous virtually independent

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1. Debrette, p. cxxxi.

princedom and vice-regalities, paying token fealty to the Timurid throne at Delhi, but functioning independent of any effective central control. Thus, although the Nawab Nazims of Bengal technically derived their viceregal powers from the reigning Mughal, for all practical purposes they were the defacto kings of the province. Despite the fact that the Mughal emperor continued to be considered "the sole fountainhead of honour", and "every outward mark of respect, every profession of allegiance, continued to be paid to the person who filled the throne of the house of Timour",<sup>1</sup> the Emperor had become administratively insignificant.

All through the Mughal period the Nawab Nazim's authority in Bengal had rested on the strength of the nizamat arms and his personal capacity to rally the indigenous forces. These forces comprised the local chiefs having personal sway over the population within the territories in their control. At a time when the central authority was still unimpaired, the nizamat nobility consisted of the senior officials of the provincial administration and the various chiefs mentioned above.

These local chiefs had come into existence in various ways. Some, like the Rajas of Nadia, could trace their ancestry back to the days prior to the Muslim conquest of Bengal by Bakhtiyar Khilji. The embryo of the Nadia estates was granted by the Hindu King, Adisur. Gaining mastery over large territories in a single generation, the head of the family casually adopted the title of Raja, and after eleven generations his descendent was confirmed in the raj and had the title officially recognised by the ruling Emperor in consideration of an annual tribute. In acknowledgement of

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1. J. Malcolm : The Life of Robert, Lord Clive, Vol.I.

this recognition the Nadia family forwarded a nazar of 1,000 head of cattle, a mass of gold equal to the Raja's own weight, and other valuable gifts.<sup>1</sup>

Other families with claim to authority as local chiefs rose to prominence as independent chieftains without the blessings of the paramount power and were brought into Bengal's sphere of influence by the force of arms during the earlier period of Muslim hegemony. Such were the cases of the Rajas of Cooch Behar and Tripura.<sup>2</sup> Despite the conquests, their position continued to remain that of vassal princes. They were required to pay tribute and rally round the imperial banner during times of crisis. For all other purposes they remained independent to do as they pleased.

With the collapse of the Delhi Sultanate followed by the defeat of the King of Bengal by Akbar, central control over vast areas of the province was virtually lost. The province fragmented into numerous principalities, under individual chiefs known as bhuiyas. Like the Susang family,<sup>3</sup> most of them set themselves up as masterless rajas in their different corners of the province. After a hard and long campaign the Mughals brought the province back into the imperial fold. In the process many of the bhuiyas were destroyed, while others were forced to acknowledge imperial vassalage.<sup>4</sup>

In time the number of local chiefs in Bengal increased considerably with the addition of even more new elements

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1. B.D.G. : Nadia, pp. 149,153, 155.

2. A. Karim : Murshid Quli Khan & His Times, p.78.

3. 'Genealogy of Susang Raj Family', B.C. Sinha : Changing Times, p. 6.

4. A. C. Roy : History of Bengal, pp. 54,55,107.

into their ranks. With the extension of Mughal supremacy the nizamat administration, patterned in accord with the imperial system, acquired a military basis. All officials were members of the armed forces, and were allotted ranks in accordance with the mansabdari system introduced by Akbar. According to Athar Ali during the reign of Aurangzeb, the mansabdars of the rank of 1,000 zat and above, were considered noblemen. In the province the Nawab Nazim himself was the most senior mansabdar with inferior mansabdars under his charge. A number of them were appointed as revenue collectors or jagirdars of large territories. It was an indirect method of paying the officers their salary while, simultaneously, maintaining Mughal authority in the area. Jagirs thus assigned in lieu of salary were known as jagir-i-tankwan.<sup>1</sup> Frequently the office became hereditary and the supervisory capacity was confined to a single family. The jagirdars could be officials sent to Bengal from outside, or local notables whose families had risen to prominence through their own diligence. One such local family was that of the Burdwan rajas who rose from being the kotwals of Rekabi Bazar to chaudhuris before being appointed jagirdars of Burdwan. A few more generations passed before the family acquired the title of raja.<sup>2</sup>

It must be kept in mind that the jagirdars so appointed were officials and not chiefs. The latter were the zamindars or proprietors of their own territories unlike the jagirdars who were administrators of royal estates. Though in practice the authority of the two were the same, their difference

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1. M. Athar Ali : Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb, pp.2,75.

2. Table of Succession at College of Herald's, London.

could be traced in their respective proprietorships. The sanads appointing the jagirdars quite clearly stated that they were to superintend the portions of the country committed to their charge. The hereditary privilege was for the office of local administrator and not the ownership of the property which continued to belong to the sovereign. With the decline of the Mughals, leading to the loosening of central control a number of these jagirdars gained firm footholds in the territories in their charge until their rendering of accounts became almost nominal.<sup>1</sup> In time, however, for all practical purposes, they too acquired characteristics of local chiefs with full proprietary rights over the land.

The change of status was the result of the shift in the forces of political power from the centre to the province. It was accompanied by a shift in the balance of power within the province itself, as the Nawab Nazim could no longer rely on Delhi's support and was forced to rely on local help even more than he had previously. Thus the jagirdars came to acquire baronial prestige instead of being subordinate officials, as had been the case before.<sup>2</sup>

Another category of local chiefs took shape during the last stages of Mughal rule in Bengal. When Mir Jafer became the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, he signalled his rule by making a new settlement of the province - dividing it into units called chaklas. The principal Hindu subjects, like the Dinajpur family, were appointed chakladars, and were made responsible for collecting revenue. The most important

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1. Radhabinod Pal : History of Law of Primogeniture,  
pp. 339, 340.

2. P.B. Calkins : 'Ruling Group in Bengal', J.A.S.  
Aug. 1970 p.803.



of these chakladars adopted the title of raja in due course.<sup>1</sup>

As the nizamat control declined, the powers of the local chiefs increased until they in their turn became the absolute rulers in their localities. It was the conglomeration of these different types of local chiefs that the British pioneers encountered.

Most of the local chiefs had high-sounding titles, either conferred or recognised by the Mughals, suffixed to their names. But the conferring of Indian titles followed no regulated system in accord with any graduated model of precedence. It was possible for a raja to be raised to Maharajadhiraj Bahadur in a single stride.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the question of particular titles being specifically allotted for Hindus, while others were specially reserved for Muslims, was not yet defined, and it was possible to come across a Hindu Khan side by side with a Muslim Raja.<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, the nawabs were of Mughal descent, while the rajas were of non-Mughal and Indian origin.<sup>4</sup> But the general rule did not always apply. It was even possible to encounter an Englishman who had been granted the title of Nawab.<sup>5</sup>

With the transfer of virtual paramountcy in Bengal to the East India Company, the right of granting titles and recognising the title holders of the nizamat became

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1. E.B.D.G.: Dinajpur, pp. 22-24.

2. B.D.G. : Burdwan, pp. 26-31.

3. Hindu Khan of Narajole, and Muslim Raja of Birbhum.

4. A. M. Khan : Transition in Bengal, p. 11.

5. e.g. Lord Clive = Nawab Sabut Jung Bahadur.

the joint prerogative of the British along with the Mughal authorities. Confusion continued to prevail. Titles were conferred without much respect to method. No college of heralds was created to systematize precedence or to set a pattern for granting titles in the future. Even a mere act of humanitarian charity to a British officer could be the primary cause for being raised to a rajaship.<sup>1</sup> But to secure the blessings of the British in reality, and the Mughals as a necessary formality, became the accepted practice.<sup>2</sup> Up to 1775, however, it was assumed that the Nawab Nazim was, at least in name, the focus of power in Bengal. The question of his position came to prominent focus when two cases were brought before the Supreme Court in that year. As the vakil of the Nawab Nazim was implicated, a memorial was forwarded to the Governor General claiming immunity from the Court's jurisdiction, in accord with the privileges granted to all foreign powers. Warren Hastings declined to acknowledge the Nawab Nazim as a sovereign prince. The question was tested in the law courts, which formally declared that the status of the Nawab Nazim was not equivalent to that of the sovereigns of Europe. Yet, presumably because the British were still in the process of consolidation, the Nawab's naib continued to retain the formal semblance of power and issued titles, employments, khilats, horses, and jewels in the Nawab Nazim's name.<sup>3</sup> The deception was so successful that it was possible to find people such as the Raja of Morang

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1. 'Kassimbazar Raj', Q.R. no. CXIII, 1875, pp. 90-94.

2. Maharaja Bahadur Loknath of Kassimbazar's title was granted by Nawab Nazim on the recommendation of Warren Hastings in 1785; Tej Chand of Burdwan was invested Maharajadhiraj Bahadur by Shah Alam and confirmed by the British in 1791.

3. Z. Ahmad : 'Decline & Fall of Nawabs of Bengal', A.S.P.J., 1966, pp. 97-106.

applying to the Nawab Nazim for assistance against their enemies, and others such as Jawahir Singh applying to the Nawab Naib for permission while seeking friendship with the British at Calcutta. The deception benefitted the British at a time when they were still establishing their supremacy, as they could claim that many of their acts were carried out on behalf of, or under the instruction of, the Nawab Nazim.<sup>1</sup>

While Indian policy remained in the control of a commercial company, the question of precedence lacked importance. The emphasis was on the systematisation of revenue collection and land tenure. In the process matters became even more confused than before. The new Administration misunderstood the legal rights and functions of the jagirdars, chakladars, etc., and equated them with the vassal chiefs. Doubtless the vassal princedoms of the preceding era could be equated with the hereditary nobility of Europe, But the majority that the infant British colony encountered were the imperial officers of the previous regime. They were even told so by the local experts. The Rai Rayan and the Kanungos, replying to a questionnaire in 1773, quite clearly stated that, after the death of a zamindar, the zamindari devolves to his son, but "the country belongs to the King, who may indeed give it to whom he pleases". They further emphasised that if the heir failed or neglected to secure a sanad from the King "the Mutsuddies and other officers of the Sircar will not acknowledge him as Zamindar...". But there were others who opined otherwise. The pandits replied that upon the death of a zamindar "the ground belongs to his son, as also his other effects. Whether or not the King's sunnud is necessary to put him

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1. A.M. Khan : 'Transition in Bengal', pp.137,138.

in possession is not written in the Shaster".<sup>1</sup> One can surmise that the former were referring to the jagirdars, chakladars, etc., and the latter to the vassal chiefs. As both groups were generally addressed as zamindars, the confusion is understandable. The British, being conditioned to a landowning nobility, were presumably unable to see the subtle difference and declared all of them as proprietors of the areas in their keeping by the Permanent Settlement, officially associating large estates with superior titles. Its side effect was the decline in importance of the military and administrative nobilities. Thus came into being the foundation on which the group, addressed in the future as the landed nobles of Bengal, developed.

It was soon obvious to the large landholders that, as far as they were concerned, the Permanent Settlement was more of a curse than a boon. Years of ineffective superior control had induced them to cultivate negligent habits and they were often unable to meet the revenue demands of the new government which settled the matter by auctioning large sections of their properties to the highest bidders. Strict administration led to most old estates being reduced to smaller units. The people who bought them were men of active business habits who had risen in life from small beginnings and accumulated wealth by commercial enterprise. Such men were anxious to exchange their wealth for the prestige arising from the possession of land.<sup>2</sup> The auctions provided them with the opportunity. Many from amongst the new landholders were in time granted titles associated

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1. P. Francis to P. Mitchell, Memorandum on Rights of Zemindars, 1776., pp. 12,13,16.

2. 'Rajas of Rajshahi', C.R. no.CXI. 1873, p.18.

with nobles of the previous regimes. It was not long before the descendants of the nobles of old and the new grantees were bracketted together as one body.

In 1917, Maharaja Tagore attempted to classify these zamindar noblemen into different compartments and analyse their hierarchical status. He stated that the first class represented the old Hindu and Muslim rajas of the country, previous to the Mughal conquest in 1576, or persons who claimed the status. The second class were rajas or great land-holders dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and some of whom were, like the first class, de facto rulers in their own territories, subject to a tribute or land tax to the representative of the emperor. The third and most numerous class were persons whose families had held the office of collecting revenue during a few generations. The zamindars of the first and second classes held princely darbars, maintained their own bodies of armed followers, dispensed justice in their territories and handed down their positions from father to son.<sup>1</sup> Maharaja Tagore could have added that their personal powers were such that they were able to war with each other,<sup>2</sup> make war against the Nawab Nazim,<sup>3</sup> and even defy the British.<sup>4</sup> But, despite the fact that the larger zamindars could be classified to some extent, there was still no way of distinguishing an ordinary zamindar from a nobleman nor the lesser titles from the noble titles during the Company era.

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1. The Englishman : 22 Nov. 1917, p.4.

2. B.D.G. : Nadia, pp. 156-157.

3. Ibid. : Birbhum, p.13.

4. S.N. Das Gupta : 'Revolt of Tilok Chand',  
U.P.H.S.J. Nov. 1934, pp.34-51.

The Act of 1858 formally brought India directly under the Crown. With the formal re-creation of an Indian sovereign<sup>1</sup> an interest in the sovereign's nobility in India, or rather what came closest in resemblance to the British nobility, began to take root. Periodical darbars and assemblies summoned by the Governor General and the Governors, heightened the interest further. Moreover, the conferment of titles was transformed into a carefully directed process for strengthening the foundation of the British Empire in India. Indians were rewarded with honours with the conscious aim of increasing the number of loyal supporters of the British Crown.<sup>2</sup>

The Calcutta Review of 1872 and 1873 published a number of articles on the "territorial aristocracy" of Bengal. The author claimed that he planned to deal with the territorial and genealogical history of "noblemen" and "gentlemen" of the province.<sup>3</sup> With the Jubilee Darbar of Victoria the interest grew. In 1879, Loke Nath Ghose attempted to compile biographies of the Indian nobles.<sup>4</sup> By the last decade of the nineteenth century the first official attempt to regularise the classification of the noblemen in India was carried out. Sir Roper Lethbridge attempted, in 1893, to list Indian "nobles" and "gentlemen" in the manner of the British peerage. It was not an easy project. The editor confesses to the extreme difficulties

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1. Victoria was declared Queen Empress of India in 1877.

2. V.C.P. Chaudhury : 'Titles & ~~Their~~ Implications',  
B.R.S.J., 1959, p.435.

3. 'Burdwan Raj', C.R. no.CVIII, 1872, p.171.

4. Chiefs, Rajas & Zamindars , pp. i-vi.

he encountered in the monumental task he had undertaken. Ultimately he was faced by the impossibility of clear identification, and compiled the list in an alphabetical order rather than by seniority. In conclusion, he recommended the creation of an Indian College of Arms or, at least, the keeping of systematic records of the Indian nobility in the Foreign Office.

Sir Roper's analysis of Indian titles led him to the conclusion that they were created either by grant from the Government, or by descent, or by well established usage. "The hereditary Maharajas, Rajas and Nawabs of British India occupied a position very similar to that of the British Peerage of England," he wrote, "while the holders of lower titles may be compared with English Knight Bachelors, and the Knights and Companions of the Military Orders." Some Indian titles were personal, and remained extant during the lifetime of the recipient, while others had been officially recognised as hereditary by the Paramount Power. The point was supplemented by the remark that no title below that of the Raja or Nawab was ever declared hereditary. He ranked only the titles that could be declared hereditary as noble titles.<sup>1</sup> Thus, by the turn of the century, the Bengal nobility was officially recognised as comprising the people with the title of Raja, Raja Bahadur, Maharaja, Maharaja Bahadur, Maharajadhiraj Bahadur for Hindus, and Nawab and Nawab Bahadur for Muslims. Any person with a lesser title was listed in the official list as "title holder" as opposed to "nobleman" for the former. Moreover, particular titles for specific religious communities were demarcated.

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1. Golden Book, pp.VIII,X,XI,XII.

Thus, for the first time, the nebulous group of title holders had been divided into categories similar to those termed as the nobilis majores and nobilis minores in England, giving them a definite identity. But, on the issue as to who should be recognised as such, and under what circumstances, was still left undecided.

The decision to hold the Coronation Darbar at Delhi created an urgent necessity to re-examine the principle on which Indian titles were bestowed and define it more precisely.<sup>1</sup> The King-Emperor himself was to be present and was to grant honours personally. It was essential to safeguard against any mistake which could arouse criticism, calling for an apology, during such an important occasion. Moreover, the need was felt, according to Walter Lawrence, to separate the "territorial nobles" from the "bazar rajas"<sup>2</sup> It was decided to ascertain the views of the leading Indian title holders of senior rank. The local Governments were instructed to nominate their representatives to discuss the matter. The Maharaja of Burdwan was selected by the Bengal Government to represent the province.

The Title Committee thus created recommended that the titles: kumar, maharaj kumar, rai, rao, khan, diwan, sardar, thakur, sardar sahib, and nawabzada should no longer be granted by the Government as they were family titles. The titles were to be recognised by the Authorities

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1. A similar attempt was made during Lytton's darbar. The Committee suggested "an extension of the honours of the Indian Empire, the creation of a 'libro d'oro' to enhance existing titles and prevent unauthorised assumptions, the conferment of rank in the British Army on certain princes....". But nothing was done to define precisely the different prerogatives in keeping with hierarchical ranking. — L.A. Knight : 'Royal Titles Act & India', Historical Journal no.xi,3 (1968), p.78.

2. Lawrence to Wigram, 4 June 1911, L & T.K. : 1910-11, Vol. VC3, pt. I., p.78.



but not conferred as titles of personal distinction, as currently practised. The noble titles, as defined by Lethbridge, were to be bestowed very sparingly, and only to persons of "good" families who were in a position "to maintain them suitably". On the other hand, the lesser titles were to be granted more liberally to inculcate loyalty to the British regime in a greater number of people. The qualifications for noble titles were to be the possession of considerable landed property, unimpeachable fidelity to the Government, respectable private character, and the services in recognition of which they were to be granted must necessarily be of an exceptionally high standard. Furthermore, the use of the titles kumar, maharaj kumar, and nawabzada was to be restricted to the sons of officially recognised hereditary nobles only as classified by Lethbridge. Even the sons of nobles whose titles had not been so recognised were not to attach any titles to their names.<sup>1</sup>

Along with these recommendations further concessions to the noblemen were recommended by the King's Private Secretary. He suggested that the King-Emperor should grant them the right of territorial signatures. Those who held hereditary titles higher than that of raja or nawab were to be allowed to sign territorially, while the hereditary rajas and nawabs should sign their names along with their territorial titles.<sup>2</sup> The recommendation was not accepted altogether. Only the Nawab

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1. Hardinge to King's Sec. 29 June 1911. Ibid, Vol.VC3., pt.II, pp.98d,98f,98g,98h.

2. King's Private Sec. to Hardinge 16 June 1911, L & T.K. : 1910-11, Vol.VC3, pt.I, pp.77-78.

of Murshidabad and the Maharaja of Burdwan were permitted to sign territorially in the same way as the Maharajas of Cooch Behar and Tripura, while the rest were conceded only the right to sign their names along with their territorial title.<sup>1</sup> The lesser title holders, although they might have been proprietors of huge zamindaris, were to continue to sign as before. Thus a well graduated body of noblemen, following a regulated warrant of precedence and privilege according to seniority, came into being in Bengal.

Having traced the historical evolution of the zamindari class, and of the noble titles which came to be confined to that class' senior members, we can now categorise the noble houses. The local chiefs who had been allowed to retain the exterior semblance of sovereign states under British protection, were designated native princes. The rest were drawn into British India, levelled down and merged with the rest of the British Indian noblemen created by the British. The latter category could be further ranked into different layers in accordance with the official recognition of separate rules of succession to noble titles. Thus, the Bengal noblemen during the twentieth century consisted of native princes, hereditary nobles, and life nobles.<sup>2</sup>

The supreme noblemen of Bengal, according to the warrant of precedence at the Governor's darbars

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1. Cumming to Sec.For.Dept.Ind. 4 Oct. 1913, B.P.P.  
: Oct. 1913, Vol.9146, p.11.

2. Appendix I.

thus established, were the Maharajas of Cooch Behar and Tripura. Neither was considered senior to the other. Precedence was given in accordance with the date of accession, seniority being determined by the date of demise of the late Maharaja.<sup>1</sup> Being the only two native princes of Bengal they had special privileges denied to the other noblemen. The gaddis were treaty bound to the Crown, subordinate to the Viceroy and supervised by the Governor of Bengal. Direct supervision was in the hands of the political agents for the states. The Commissioner of Bhagalpur and the Magistrate of Tripura at Comilla were the political agents for Cooch Behar and Tripura respectively.<sup>2</sup> The Cooch Behar and Tripura states had passed under British suzerainty in 1773 and 1765 respectively.<sup>3</sup>

The native princes generally followed the law of primogeniture during succession to the gaddis. Cooch Behar followed the principle without any variation; but Tripura had a process of succession unique to itself. The Maharaja had the power of nominating his heirs. In 1904 a sanad recognised his right to nominate any male member of his family, descended through males from him or any male ancestor of his family, as his successor or Jubraj and a successor to the Jubraj called Bara Thakur. In short, the Jubraj, upon becoming Maharaja, could nominate only the successor to the successor under normal

1. List of Ruling Princes, Provincial Order of Precedence, 1937, p.4
2. 'List of Principal Political Appointments in India' : Memoranda of Native States 1912: Hardinge, Vol. Va.32, p.1.
3. Chiefs, Rajas and Zamindars: pp. 199,201.

circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Identical systems of inheritance were followed in the case of their zamindaris, since they, despite being located in British Bengal, were considered impartible appendages of the protected native states. Both Roshnabad and Laharpur estates of Tripura<sup>2</sup> and the Chaklajat Estate of Cooch Behar<sup>3</sup> were inalienable. Moreover, on succession the native princes had the right to repudiate their predecessor's debts at will,<sup>4</sup> making both the states and the zamindaris secure from passing out of their control. Presumably the right was never exercised, for fear of their losing face with the Government, their own associates and the public in general.

Though the native prince seemed to be kept within bounds merely by social sanctions, in reality he was definitely subordinate to the central authority. He succeeded and ruled by the grace of the British. No succession in a native state was valid until it had been formally recognised and confirmed by the Paramount Power. There had been cases in which the succession of native princes, announced by the native darbars, had been set aside by the Government of India. The ordinary rule, however, in the case of the existence of an undisputed natural heir, was that he would be allowed to succeed as a matter of course, unless he was obviously and totally

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1. Aitchison, pp.194,195.

2. Chiefs, Nobles and Zamindars, pp.223,224.

3. Appendix II.

4. Carmichael to Hardinge 23 June 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol.Va 7, pt.I, p.300.

unfit.<sup>1</sup> But what was to be taken into account in order to judge fitness to sit on the gaddi was left unexplained. It was for the paramount authority to decide at its discretion. In view of the facts that the permission to rule depended on the British, and that daily administration was largely vested in the political agents, it is correct to say that the native principalities were as attached to the Governor's darbar as the nobles within the jurisdiction of the Bengal legislature. But owing to their evolutionary emergence, they continued to receive token precedence over all others on ceremonial occasions.

On the demise of a native prince, his darbar informed the Viceroy of the fact, and a date was fixed for his successor's installation. During the investiture a grand public darbar was held where the Viceroy or Governor, acting as the Crown's representative, ceremoniously installed the new prince on the gaddi. Thus the prince's sense of importance was satisfied: this fostered a feeling of identification with the British Empire. Simultaneously, tradition, so respected by the Indian populace, was maintained. Yet, all along, it was made subtly clear that the British were the supreme authority and not the prince. On the fixed date the Crown's representative arrived in state, and was received publicly by the new prince, as an underlord, at the scene of installation. The salutation for the representative was fired by a hundred man guard, compared to only a fifty gun salute for the new prince.<sup>2</sup> While proceeding

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1. Chief Sec.Beng. to Sec.For.Dept.Ind. 27 Aug. 1911, G.I.F.D.P.: Dec. 1911, Vol. R/1/19/453, p.1.

2. Chief Sec.Beng. to Sec.For.Dept.Ind. 17 Oct. 1911, G.I.F.D.P.: Dec. 1911, Vol. R/1/19/453. pp.5-6.

to the Durbar Chamber in a ceremonial procession, all could see the Maharaja-to-be being escorted by the political agent while the Crown's representative walked alone at the rear under a canopy established as a royal symbol by the imperial powers prior to the British.<sup>1</sup> Processions were utilised by the British to present a fine spectacle for the people and, simultaneously, by detaching the important personages from the rest of the procession, further heightened their importance in the public eye.<sup>2</sup>

The maintenance of the appearance of semi-sovereignty was continued even after installation. Once a prince had been invested, all civil administration within the state was carried out in his name. Moreover, he was granted the privilege of officially corresponding with, and being received by, the Viceroy, and of expecting a return visit from him in a manner similar to sovereign states. Technically, the relationship between the prince and the Crown was direct. On the surface it appeared to rest on well-defined treaties and engagements. A school of political writers led by Sir William Lee Warner even maintained that the states fell within the jurisdiction of international law. Such arguments were based on the facts that the treaties, engagements and agreements of the British Government with the states abounded in instances of specific consent given to the adjustment of differences by methods of justice which could only be described as international law. Moreover, the agreements were equally explicit as to the exclusion

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1. Sec.For.Dept.Ind. to Chief Sec.Beng. 29 Oct. 1911, G.I.F.D.P. : Dec. 1911, Vol. R/1/19/453, p.8.

2. Wilson to Lady Hardinge 10 June 1911, Correspondence: Fleetwood Wilson, Vol.7, pp.4,5.

of the law of British India, and as to the incapacity of its legislature to make laws binding on the princes and subjects of the states. Sir Frederick Pollock corrected this misconception by pointing out that the relations of the Government, and the states were governed by a body of conventions and usages, rather than by formal treaties. In time they had been deprived of their independent status, leaving only a reflection of their former selves.<sup>1</sup>

In reality, the principalities were administered under the vigil of the political agent. Even in states like Cooch Behar, where state councils had been established, the Agents were ex-officio members of such bodies.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, on the Resident's recommendation, the British Government could send troops at any time. The locality where the troops were quartered would be considered British territory for the time being. If the Government had decided to quarter troops from one end of the state to the other, the entire principality would automatically have become directly administered British territory. Furthermore, the troops that the prince himself was allowed to employ were limited to a relatively negligible number. Princes were further prohibited from constructing any new forts, from keeping old ones in repair, and from starting ordinance factories for the manufacture of arms.<sup>3</sup> To prevent the possibility of a hostile alliance

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1. 'States Having Political Relations with Govt. of Beng.', Memoranda of Native States 1912: Hardinge, Vol. Va.32, p.126.
  2. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 4 May 1912, p.291.
  3. Nat.N.P.: week ending 4 Feb. 1911, p.116.

being formed by the princes, they were prevented from corresponding with each other until 1918. The letters had to be despatched via the Political Agent, or a copy supplied to the residency for its perusal.<sup>1</sup>

The remaining nobles, other than the native princes, being mere zamindars, had no direct approach nor treaty relations with the Viceroy. Their estates being situated in a directly administered part of British India, they were invested by the Governor-General in Council,<sup>2</sup> and remained under the direct supervision of the Governor in Council. These zamindar noblemen could be conveniently divided into two groups: hereditary and personal. The former succeeded to the titles of their predecessors in more or less the same manner as the native princes. On the conclusion of the mourning period the heir simply assumed the title as his birthright.<sup>3</sup> The latter, on the other hand, were invested with the noble title at each successive generation for their personal or family achievements. But the position of the two in the eyes of the Government did not differ to any noticeable extent. It was quite possible for a life noble to be given precedence over hereditary noblemen.<sup>4</sup> In the eyes of their fellow title holders the same attitude would prevail.

Quite probably the same opinion would exist in the minds

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1. Deputy Sec.For. & Pol.Dept.Ind. to Chief Sec.Beng. 7 Feb. 1919, B.P.F.: Feb. 1919, Vol. 10525, P.73.
  2. Though the same person functioned in both capacities, as Viceroy he represented the Crown for the native states and as Governor General he was the administrative head of the directly administered province of the Raj.
  3. The Englishman : 20 Aug. 1918, p.4. (Nashipur)
  4. Rajas of the Chakma and Mong tribes would be placed relatively low in the hierarchy.



of the educated community and the illiterate peasantry and urban labour force also. Eminence would depend more on participation in public life.

It was so because, although technically the personal title holders were granted their titles only for life, the usual practice was to invest each succeeding generation as a matter of course. Thus it was possible to find a life noble with a longer pedigree than a hereditary one.<sup>1</sup> The usual practice was to test the merit and loyalty of the successor for a short interim period before bestowing the relevant honours. Only on very rare occasions were the descendants of noble houses by-passed and left unrecognised.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for the two rules of succession depended to a great extent on the system of inheritance followed by individual noble families of Bengal. Indian inheritance followed the scriptures and local customs. The Dayabhag and the Mitakshara of the Hindus and the Muslim Hanafi schools of law advocate division of inheritance amongst the heirs. Adherence to this principle resulted in sub-division and fragmentation of estates. Too often, the individual holdings became minute and insignificant, losing prestige in the eyes of the public. Often an affluent family would split up into many petty zamindaris.<sup>3</sup> The tendency to fragment made it practically imperative to confer and re-confer the dignities over and over again to avoid the possibility of noble titles becoming a ludicrous farce.

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1. Nadia was longer than any hereditary line.
  2. Kumar Polden, son of Raja of Karmi, was never invested with noble title. - Stephenson to Sec.Rev.Dept.Beng. 13 June 1911, B.R.P. : Jan. 1912, Vol.8939, p.15.
  3. Ranajit Sinha : Reforms in Administration of India, p.23

However, a small number of zamindaris followed the same principle as the native princes and continued to pass on the estates from a single deceased to a single successor. In such cases primogeniture became the customary law followed by the families in question.<sup>1</sup> In 1841, the Judicial Committee decided that in every individual zamindari in which the custom had been that it descend entire, the custom should then prevail in the eyes of the law, despite the fact that it went contrary to the scriptures. Inheritance by primogeniture existed both in Hindu and Muslim families of Bengal; thus came into existence the impartible estates of many of the major zamindars of Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

Although the impartible estates maintained succession according to the principle of primogeniture, inheritance was not as clear-cut as the system prevalent in Britain. In determining from whom a single heir had to be selected, the class or degree of relationship of the kindred had to be ascertained. Next, it was necessary to see whether the custom of the relevant family disclosed any special method of selection. In default of such custom, seniority of age usually constituted a title by descent to the impartible estate. In communities where polygamy prevailed, the question would necessarily arise as to whether seniority in marriage or superiority in caste and form of marriage of

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1. Primogeniture Zamindaris:-Burdwan, Maliara, Simlanal, Jhargram, Balgarh, Ramgarh, Murshidabad, Nashipur, Narajole, Baikantpur. - Ascoli to Sec.Rev.Dept.Beng. 28 Jan. 1919, B.R.P. : Aug.1919, Vol.10532, p.161; Dhanbaria assured unitary succession by Beng. Sett. Act. III (B.C.) of 1904 - Rep. Administration British India: 1911-12, Vol.35, p.vi; Tagore also - Rep. Com. to consider Family Settlement, 30 Oct. 1911, B.R.P. : Feb, 1912, Vol. 8939, p.300.

2. Radha Binod Pal: History of Law of Primogeniture, p.362.

a wife would in any way effect the seniority of the son.<sup>1</sup> Only after complying with all the necessary factors could a son inherit the gaddi and the title. From this we see that single succession secured precedence and continuity for the nobles following the primogeniture principle of inheritance.

Only a few decades before the period under study there existed a noble house with a position even superior to that of Cooch Behar and Tripura. The Murshidabad family's nominal seniority continued to exist even after the transfer of power.<sup>2</sup> The titular rank of the head of the family was drastically reduced from that of the Nawab Nazim to a mere hereditary zamindar Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad. Nawab Nazim Mansur Ali Khan was forced to abdicate in favour of his heir for licentious and reckless misbehaviour in 1882. His successors were to be entitled Nawab Bahadur only.<sup>3</sup> There is a passing reference in the Government of India Foreign and Political Departmental papers that the degradation of the Murshidabad family was not due to the misbehaviour of the Nawab Nazim only. It was alleged in a letter to the Secretary of State by the Governor General in Council that the British Authorities followed systematically the policy of gradually reducing the rank, dignities, and emoluments at

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1. Radha Binod Pal: History of Law of Primogeniture, p.381.
  2. Continued to be addressed as Nawab Nazim of Bengal and received 19 gun salute, against 13 of Cooch Behar and Tripura.
  3. Gould to Wood 25 Oct. 1917, G.I.F & P.D.P. : 1918, Vol. R/1/19/606, p.1.

each period of succession of the Indian noblemen.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful whether there was any truth behind the allegation. The evidence available shows a contrary policy. The Government of Bengal in a letter dated 22 August, 1885, made it abundantly clear that it considered it essential to safeguard and maintain the high social position of the Murshidabad House.<sup>2</sup> This assurance is repeatedly voiced and acted upon by officials on a number of occasions. As a matter of fact the tendency was to increase the prestige of the nobles as they were loyal to the imperial concept. The argument was doubtless put forward in 1918 by the Government of India to support its stand against the suggestion that the Nawab's status be raised to that of a native prince. It feared that such a step would offend the other native princes who had recently given unrestrained support in Britain's war against Germany. With the abdication of Mansur Ali the institution of Nawab Nazim was abolished forever in Bengal, and the Cooch Behar and Tripura families superseded the Murshidabad House in precedence. The only concession left to the Nawab was the status of premier nobleman in British Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

The Burdwan family's title was unique in Bengal. Though a mere zamindar, the head of the family had the unusual privilege of being addressed as Maharajadhiraj Bahadur. The title had been granted to the family during the time of the Mughals, and continued to remain

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1. Viceroy to Sec.St. 30 Aug. 1918, Ibid, Prog. no.26, Lt.no.59 of 1918, p.6.

2. Murshidabad to Chelmsford 12 Sept. 1917, G.I.F. & P.D.P. : Jan. 1918, Vol. 10416, p.4.

3. Aitchison, p.183.

in existence even with the transfer of paramountcy. Though flamboyant, the title never carried the same prestige as that of the Nawab Nazim. He neither symbolised the independence of Bengal prior to British supremacy nor did the family ever rise beyond the comparatively junior 5,000 mansabdar rank during that time.<sup>1</sup> Once more we find the Government consciously exerting itself to maintain a noble family's prestige as an added support to its authority. In order to secure the Maharaja's position even further, the Government issued a sanad in 1908 declaring the title a hereditary one, attached to the estate.<sup>2</sup>

For a short period of time the British raised the Nawab of Dacca higher not only than that of the Maharaja of Burdwan but also than the Nawab of Murshidabad. In 1911, Salimulla Khan of Dacca received the unusual favour of the title G.C.I.E. for, amongst other things, his vigorous efforts to raise the standard of the Bengali Muslim community as a whole. It was an honour very rarely granted to any other than a very few senior native princes.<sup>3</sup> The Administration assessed that the influence of the Nawab was so great that it was necessary to assure its continuance in favour of law and order.<sup>4</sup> The enhanced position of the Dacca family remained until the demise of Salimulla Khan in 1915, and

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1. B.D.G. : Burdwan, p.31.
  2. Sec.For.Dept.Ind. to Chief Sec.Beng. 13 Oct. 1911, G.I.F.D.P.: Oct. 1911, Vol. R/1/19/449, p.2.
  3. Nat. N.P. : week ending 30 Dec. 1911, p.1573.
  4. Discussed in fuller detail in Chapter V.

returned to its original position, that of hereditary Nawab Bahadur.

The only other unusual feature in the ranks of the so-called noblemen were the titles of the chiefs of the Mong and Chakma tribes. Their tribal names were attached to their titles, and they were addressed as the Mong Raja and Chakma Raja.<sup>1</sup> All other title holders ranked between the Raja and the Maharaja Bahadur and the Nawab and the Nawab Bahadur.

The conferment of such titles was officialised by the granting of sanads (writs) and Khilats (robes of honour) and the declaration of the fact in the Honours Gazettes. The donning of the robe of honour was made into an exclusive privilege of the nobles in 1913.<sup>2</sup> The investiture was usually held in a darbar. If possible, the writ was presented in the throne room of the Governor's Palace amidst a gathering of important dignitaries.<sup>3</sup> "Native princes, noblemen" and "title holders" of lesser rank, as graded in the warrant of precedence, were seated to the right of the dais. The sanad drawn for the recipient was read to the assembly before being handed over. In return, he presented a nazar of a Gold Mohur to the Governor.<sup>4</sup> If it was not possible to hold the investiture in the Governor's Palace, the chief government officer of the Division or the Governor himself, depending on the recipient's

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1. Petitions of Chakma & Mong Chiefs', B.P.P. : Feb. 1913, Vol. 9146, pp.25,30.
  2. Nat.N.P. : week ending 22 March 1913, p.284.
  3. 'Rajas of Rajshahi', C.R. no.CXI 1873, p.38.
  4. S & B.P.Singh Roy: History of Chakdighi Family, pp.96-99.

seniority in rank and importance to the Government, held a public darbar at the recipient's estate.<sup>1</sup> If the recipient was a lady, then she could receive it standing behind a screen.<sup>2</sup> Thus, many components of the proceedings continued to remain in the form inherited from previous regimes. The granting of sanads and khilats and the offering of nazar were in existence in pre-British days, but the British introduced systematic court precedence, seating regulations in accordance with a formal code, and demarcation between native princes, noblemen, and lesser title holders.

These ennobled personages could not acquire their status by acts of munificence alone, as it is commonly believed. It would qualify the person for a lesser title only. To gain a noble title a landowner, over and above the standard set by the Title Committee, was required to be a political asset to the Crown.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a suitable standard of "dignified life" was considered essential by the Government. Often a greatly deserved title, according to the standard set by the Government, was withheld on the ground that the potential recipient was involved in financial difficulties, hence would be unable to maintain the required standard suitably.<sup>4</sup> A person could also miss his opportunity on the ground that he was too young to shoulder the superior

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1. 'Rajas of Rajshahi', C.R.no.CXI 1873, p.40

2. The Bengalee : 21 July 1911, p.4. (Rani Dinamani of Santosh).

3. Chief Sec.Beng. to Duke 18 Oct. 1911, C.P.I.: 1911, Vol.Va6, pt.I, p.397.

4. Carmichael to Hardinge 25 Aug. 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol.Va8, pt.I, p.132.

status with proper "dignity".<sup>1</sup>

A combination of the recommendations of the Title Committee and the standard already set by the Authorities enhanced the prestige carried by the superior titles even further as access to their ranks became practically impossible. In the Birthday Honours Gazette of 1916, only four out of 250 Indian titles granted in the entire country were of the type considered as reserved for noblemen. Moreover, the four invested were mere promotions to higher dignities in respect of persons already belonging to the group acknowledged as Indian nobles by the Government.<sup>2</sup> Thus, on that occasion, there was not a single new entry to the higher ranks. Similarly, in the New Years Honours List of 1917, out of 200 grantees of Indian titles, six were of the superior kind, of which only three were new members.<sup>3</sup> The same pattern was apparent after 1911.

The Government of India's reluctance to grant higher titles when avoidable came into prominent focus in 1917. The Bengal Government, administering a province dependent largely on trade and commerce, recommended Rai Sita Nath Roy Bahadur for a rajaship. In reply, the Imperial Government maintained that the superior title was hardly suitable for a business man, and that the services rendered by the

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1. Carmichael to Hardinge 19 Nov. 1912, C.P.I.:1912, Vol.Va8, pt.I , p.348b.

2. Honours Gazette : 3 June 1916.

3. Ibid : 1 Jan. 1917.



Rai Bahadur were not of the exceptional nature for which he could be considered for such a title. The Bengal Government, annoyed at the rejection, pointed out that business men had been invested with superior titles before. Such were the cases of Raja Shew Bux Bogla (1897), Raja Bijoy Singh Dudhoria (1908), Raja Kristo Das Law (1910), and Raja Rishee Case Law (1913). To further support their argument the Bengal Government stated that the Rai Bahadur should receive the title in consideration of his wealth, the high position held by him in native society, and his varied public services. He was the Sheriff of Calcutta in 1888, was a leading member of important associations, and took considerable interest in municipal affairs. Moreover, he had rendered useful work in connection with the raising of the Victoria Memorial Fund, and had provided for the RS.550,000 scheme for model housing for the poor.<sup>1</sup> Despite this strong recommendation, the Imperial Government refused the proposal. It maintained that the custom of loose investment grew up owing to the absence, before the Title Committee, of a proper standard of granting "high native titles". Since then they were granted in very exceptional cases, and it was certainly not clear that the Rai Bahadur's case came within that category. His position was based not on family but on wealth derived from business. The title of Raja primarily connoted family and high social standing.<sup>2</sup> As he was already a Rai

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1. Gourlay to Maffey 17 March 1917, L & T (India), Vol. 18, pt.1, pp.190-192.

2. Maffey to Gourlay 10 May 1917, Ibid., Vol.18, pt.II, p.97.

Bahadur, first amongst titles for Hindus, he was granted a C.I.E. as a compromise.

The closed door policy, along with the awareness of being considered more "dignified" than others further nourished the desire of individual noblemen to achieve greater heights within their own hierarchy. The Maharaja of Burdwan self-righteously claimed, in 1904, that it was ungracious to covet titles and honours from the Government<sup>1</sup>. But a study of his career shows repetitive attempts to increase his status to the equivalent of a native prince. During the discussions of the Title Committee, he moved that the titles superior to that of Maharaja Bahadur be reserved for territorial princes.<sup>2</sup> If the proposal had been accepted, he would automatically have been equated with the native princes, since he was the only person in Bengal with such a title. Having failed once, he persisted in his attempt and applied to the British authorities three times between 1911 and 1919 for an increase in rank. Basing his arguments on legal grounds, he pointed out that a territorial form of address had been used in all the notifications conferring titles upon the Zamindars of Burdwan from 1833 onwards. Even the royal licence signed by the Queen herself in 1868, allowing the family to bear arms, stated that the colours were to belong to the "heirs male of his body who shall succeed him in the title of Maharaja of

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1. B.C. Mahtab : Studies, p.66.

2. Hardinge to King's Sec. 29 June 1911, L & T.K.: 1910-11, Vol.VC3, pt.II, pp. 98d,98f,98g,98l.

Burdwan". The sanad of 1908 corroborated the fact by stating that the title was "to be attached to the estate". Despite the fact that the Bengal Government highly recommended his case,<sup>1</sup> the appeal was rejected by the Imperial Authorities at every turn.

The Nawab of Murshidabad, being less subtle, requested a rise in rank on grounds of personal and family humiliation. He complained that since the title of Nawab Bahadur was granted to his grandfather the same title had been bestowed upon various others, and nothing remained to distinguish him as the representative of the old nizamat house.<sup>2</sup> He not only wished to be one of the "dignified" group, but desired to be remembered as the premier amongst them. Although his cause was supported by many newspapers of Bengal<sup>3</sup>, the Government ignored his appeal.

It was not only by direct appeal to the Government that the nobles tried to supercede one another. Manipulations and intrigues to overstep their ranks were not uncommon. There were instances when the authorities had to step in and reprimand noblemen who had casually adopted the territorial type of title permitted only to the Maharajas of Cooch Behar, Tripura and Burdwan, and the Nawab of Murshidabad.<sup>4</sup>

With the forthcoming visit of the Emperor to Calcutta in 1911, the struggle for precedence was intensified. Early in the year the Maharajas of Burdwan

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1. Chief Sec.Beng. to Sec.For.& Pol.Dept.Ind. 15 Sept. 1919, G.I.F. & P.D.P. : July 1920, Vol. R/1/19/648, p.1.
  2. Gould to Wood, 25 Oct. 1917, G.I.F. & P.D.P.: 1918, Vol. R/1/19/606, p.1.
  3. See Indian Newspaper Report (Beng) of 1911 and 1912.
  4. Cumming to Sec.For.Dept,Ind. 4 Oct. 1913, B.P.P. : Oct. 1913, Vol.9146, p.11.(Dighapatia & Kakina).

and Tagore approached the authorities for permission to organise the Imperial reception. By their early move the two managed to push themselves to the very forefront of the most important social occasion during the entire period of British Indian history, thus usurping the hereditary right of the Nawab of Murshidabad to receive royalty as the premier nobleman of Bengal. A working committee was promptly formed of which the two Maharajas became President and Secretary respectively.<sup>1</sup> It was too late by the time this subtle manipulation became apparent, and an attempt was made to remedy the wrong by proposing another resolution namely that the Nawab of Murshidabad should be in the Executive Committee. Ultimately a formula was worked out by which the Nawab was allotted the honour of receiving the King on his arrival, while the two Maharajas continued to dominate the arrangements in the Working Committee for the rest of the Imperial visit.<sup>2</sup> Hardinge was fully conscious of the fact that, given the slightest chance, the "two petty little zamindar Maharajas of Bengal" would be delighted to assume a position of importance among the native princes.<sup>3</sup>

The Raja of Hetampur succeeded in emerging from comparative insignificance by a singular method. He made available the sum of Rs.50,000 at the disposal of the Queen to be distributed as charity in any way she

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1. Pvt.Sec.Viceroy to Burdwan & Tagore 30 Jan.1911, Their Majesties Visit to Calcutta: Hardinge, Vol.Va 20, p.2.
  2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 29 Apr.1911, p.499.
  3. Viceroy to Pvt.Sec.King 4 Apr.1911, L & T.K.: 1910-11, Vol. Vc3, pt.II, p.51.

saw fit.<sup>1</sup> Even the Raja of Narajole, alleged supporter of the terrorist movement in Bengal, approached a number of officials in an attempt to secure an invitation for the occasion and be placed among fellow nobles of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> It was doubtless humiliating for him to be disassociated from the group to which he felt he belonged.

The nobles' admiration of titles and precedence, the fact that their spokesman, the Title Committee, had firmly shut the door to further entry to their ranks, and the awareness of being considered more "dignified" than others led to the growth of a profound sense of the importance of their own exalted position. The Maharaja of Burdwan caused a great deal of amusement in 1905 by declaring in a private darbar that his relations with the British Government were still friendly: a remark that only a full sovereign can make in relation to foreign and friendly powers. Although he vehemently denied that he was presenting himself as a sovereign power in 1917, it is difficult to accept a denial more than a decade later.<sup>3</sup> Maharaja Tagore went a step even further than the Maharaja of Burdwan. He insinuated that the only reason that the British Empire retained its position was due to the heroic efforts of the large landholders of Bengal. But for the financial help which they had rendered at tremendous risk to themselves, Britain would have been "doomed to destruction" as a first class power in the closing years of the eighteenth

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1. Act.Lt.Gov. to Hardinge 22 Dec.1911, C.P.I.: 1911, Vol. Va6, pt.I, p.519.

2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 22 March 1913, p.284. - more detailed discussion in Chapter V.

3. The Englishman: 9 March 1918, p.3.

century. He argued that the Rohilla War, the two campaigns against Tipu Sultan, the prevention of the hostile demonstration at Oudh, the mission despatched to Nepal, the reduction of Pondicherry, the reform of the civil administration, and the arrangements made for the improvement of the navy caused a considerable drain upon the resources of the British. This crisis was **accelerated** by the fact that at the time France, Holland, Spain, and Italy (sic) were allied against her, while the armed neutrality of the Baltic Confederation was hardly less hostile. The United States had been alienated, and Austria, the sole continental ally, was exhibiting a very dubious friendship. The drain on the imperial exchequer had left the Bank of England with a cash balance of less than one million pounds, compelling it to suspend cash payments in 1797. The country had been within forty-eight hours of bankruptcy, and only the large landholders' sympathetic cooperation in the land settlement of Bengal provided the Empire with the funds that delivered it from the financial catastrophe which threatened to overwhelm it.<sup>1</sup>

The senior noblemen's attitude towards the general populace also pointed towards a sense of group superiority. Association and marriage alliances with their own respective caste members of "lesser" status had to be necessarily tolerated to a certain extent. But such marriages were arranged with great reluctance. Once married the new brides were usually made to lose all basic connections with their previous relatives and friends which automatically led to their getting thoroughly grafted into

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1. The Englishman : 22 Nov. 1917, p.4.

their new surroundings. Since most of them were married at quite a young age, they retained practically no emotional attachment to their own families. They grew from near infancy<sup>1</sup> to womanhood in their bridegrooms' homes in the same manner as the other children of the families. They spent more of their childhood and adolescence under the tutelage of their parents-in-law than under that of their own parents. Thus, despite the fact that the sons of the nobles had to marry girls of "lesser" birth it was not difficult for the bridegrooms to disassociate themselves from their relatives-by-marriage. The process was painless to their brides, and was relatively simple.<sup>2</sup> Bhupendra Chandra Sinha of Susang, recalling his childhood, writes that his uncle, the late Maharaja's brother, brought back a bride of ten from Dacca who "easily became our playmate and a valuable recruit to the team of my own and cousin sisters"<sup>3</sup>.

This attitude of superiority towards people of "lesser" birth is noticeable from various other sources also. The Maharaja of Burdwan, describing the bhadralok chashas (gentlemen farmers) in his book in which he analyses the changing Bengal scene, assumes a condescending tone. According to him they could be identified as the people who could be seen "wearing a stylishly cut shirt, dhoti imported by Ralli Brothers, or some German firm, carrying a vilaiti-chudder or scarf, holding a

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1. eg. Maharani of Burdwan was married at the age of 6; Maharani of Susang at the age of 12; Sovabazar's daughter-in-law at the age of 10; Burdwan's daughter at 12.
  2. Frequently the marriage of the daughters were also manipulated in a similar manner. Rather than sending the daughters to their new homes the sons-in-law were brought into their homes and treated as members of the family. Such sons-in-law were called ghar-jamais.
  3. B.C. Sinha: Changing Times, p.31.

fancy-handled umbrella for fear of getting sun-burnt". Later he describes newspaper editors in a similar tone. According to him, the editors "with a very few honourable exceptions, are a disreputable and venal lot".<sup>1</sup> While recommending Nawab Mohammad Ali Chaudhury's case for a rise in title, Carmichael remarked that although he did not speak English he was "proud of his lineage, and does not make himself loved by those of his own religion whom he looks on as upstarts: people like Fazlul Huq, for instance, dislike him."<sup>2</sup> The Nawab of Dacca and the Maharaja of Dinajpur provoked the wrath of the educated public and the press by proposing that a separate building for the large zamindars' children should be erected in the Dacca College.<sup>3</sup> The Maharajas of Burdwan and Nashipur, basing their demand on the existence of chiefs' colleges in other provinces, tried to persuade the Government to build an exclusive school for the large landholders of Bengal. Later the Maharajas of Burdwan, Natore, Nashipur, and Tagore pointed out in a memoranda that the big landholders, and others of similar status, and positions, were very reluctant to send their sons to the existing high schools which did not provide the education of the kind which they required.<sup>4</sup> But when this school actually received the sanction of the Secretary of State in 1915, it was as

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1. B.C. Mahtab: Studies, pp. 3,66.
  2. Carmichael to Hardinge 7 Nov. 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol. Va 10, pt.I., p.401.
  3. Nat.N.P. : week ending 13 May 1911, p.1911
  4. 'Memoranda to Carmichael', B.G.P.: Aug. 1913, Vol.9137, p.59.



a public school open to others also.<sup>1</sup> In spite of that, it continued to remain exclusive, and by the fourth year it had only forty-four carefully selected boys studying there.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Indian-owned newspapers, the Hastings House School was an instrument to further anglicise the students. The leading newspaper, Bangali, pointed out that the school "though meant for the sons of Bengali noblemen, is to leave everything Indian - Indian History, Indian Literature, etc. - out of its syllabus.... The young descendents of noblemen who will read in that school will become Anglicised by studying English literature and English History".<sup>3</sup> The advocates of the school, however, refuted the suggestion by stating that they did not desire the students to become denationalised Bengalis, but cultured and disciplined Indians who were able to take their place in the social life of modern India and contribute to the development of the country.<sup>4</sup>

Despite their arrogance, the nobles were by no means narrow-minded, and managed to absorb the liberal and social ideas of the time. Most of them were born and reared in the latter half of the nineteenth century: the century which experienced the Bengal awakening - an awakening which, to a great extent, had been activated by their forbears. A number of them tried their hand at writing

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1. The Englishman : 10 Dec. 1915, p.9.

2. Ibid: 23 Jan. 1919, p.5.

3. Ind.N.P.: week ending 12 June 1915, p.860.

4. Viceroy to Crewe 1 Jan.1915, F.L.: 1915, Vol.458, Lt.no.11, Enclo.4, p.3.

books<sup>1</sup> and editing journals,<sup>2</sup> some dabbled in social reforms<sup>3</sup>, quite a few participated in constitutional politics,<sup>4</sup> while one was even alleged to have joined the rebel forces terrorising the province.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, as the group comprised many castes and creeds, they were forced to outgrow sectarian prejudices in their personal habits, or face the danger of total disintegration.<sup>6</sup> Flexibility and tolerance were essential for existence. Furthermore, many must have been conscious that the tradition of communal tolerance by the Bengal nobles stretched as far back as the reigns of the Ilyas Shahi and the Hussain Shahi Sultans of pre-Mughal days. This outlook, considered a noble attitude, had been stamped with long established custom. It was a matter of pride to maintain that the raja or nawab was the karta or malik (patriarch) of all the prajas (inhabitants) residing on his estates. It is interesting to note that the Burdwan family name was converted from the Sanskrit word Chand to the Perso-Sanskrit Chand-Mahtab<sup>7</sup> in the nineteenth century. Doubtless it was motivated by the fact that the prajas of Burdwan estate comprised a large number of Muslims with whom the family wished to be identified as much as with their Hindu prajas.

The setting aside of social taboos is blatantly

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1. Cooch Behar, Burdwan, Tagore, Lalgola, Syed Mohammad Khan, Nawab Ali, Chakdighi, Nashipur.
  2. Cooch Behar, Natore, Paikpara, Kakina.
  3. Burdwan, Nadia, Natore, Narajole.
  4. India Office List (Bengal): 1911-19.
  5. Narajole.
  6. Their position in caste groups in Chapter II.
  7. Both Chand and Mahtab mean the moon in the two languages.

visible in the marriage alliances of the Cooch Behar and Tripura families. The Hindu Maharaja of Cooch Behar shocked the public by marrying the daughter of the celebrated Brahmo reformer Keshab Chandra Sen. Their son, Jitendra Narayan, married the Maratha Maharaj Kumari of Baroda, while two daughters married into an English family.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Maharaja of Tripura's wife was from Nepal,<sup>2</sup> while the Maharaj Kumar Ranabir Kishore took as wife the Sikh Maharaj Kumari of Patiala,<sup>3</sup> and another brother married the sister of the Raja of Dholpur.<sup>4</sup>

Tendencies towards a liberal outlook were noticeable in other spheres. The Nawab of Dacca, the spearhead of Muslim separatism, employed more Hindus in his estate than Muslims.<sup>5</sup> Nor were they restricted to junior posts. His most popular estate Superintendent was Babu Sarada Charan Mookerjee.<sup>6</sup> His personal Secretary, who handled all his private papers, also was a Hindu named S.Das Gupta.<sup>7</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan, the premier Hindu nobleman, did not hesitate to kiss the hand of the Pope, and made it a point to travel with a staff comprising an equal number of Hindus and Muslims on his way to Europe.<sup>8</sup> He also patronised Muslim institutions.<sup>9</sup> The Hindu Maharaja of Kassimbazar

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1. Indian Princess, pp.54,203,208,230.
  2. I.S.A.R. (Tripura) 1909-19, Vol.17 Rep.1915-16, p.1.
  3. The Englishman : 24 Feb. 1916, p.4.
  4. The Bengalee : 18 March 1916, p.4.
  5. Nat,owned Eng.N.P.:week ending 9 March 1912, p.172.
  6. The Englishman: 19 March 1919, p.8.
  7. The Bengalee: 7 Dec. 1911, p.3.
  8. B.C. Mahtab: Impressions, pp. 1,40.
  9. Tours (Burdwan):7-13 Dec.1912, p.51.

financially supported the Theosophical Society.<sup>1</sup> It was not unknown for a member of one religion to support the candidature of another in times of general elections.<sup>2</sup> The Nawab of Murshidabad prohibited cow slaughter in his mahal in consideration of Hindu sentiments.<sup>3</sup> Nawab Shamsul Huda declared that he never forgot that he was an Indian first and then a Muslim.<sup>4</sup>

Thus it was neither religion, nor caste, nor race, nor nationality, nor formal education,<sup>5</sup> nor the knowledge of English that predominated in the nobles' feeling of belonging to a group superior to the rest of society. Their attitude of superiority was encouraged by their high sounding titles which gave rise to a conviction that they were superior to the general public: a public which found it extremely difficult to enter their closed ranks. Their exclusiveness was furthered by the fact that they were so few in number. There were only seventy nobles in the province during the period under review.<sup>6</sup> Their conviction that they belonged to an exclusive and "dignified" group resulted in a desire for separate educational institutions, separate seating in public functions, and special treatment by the Government. These tendencies were reinforced by the fact that even this small number were at times further bound together by marriage

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1. The Englishman: 10 Feb. 1911, p.4.

2. J.H.Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power'  
J.A.S.: Feb. 1962, p.174

3. Nat.owned Eng. N.P. : week ending 13 Jan.1912, pp.33,34

4. Ibid : week ending 15 Feb.1913, p.125

5. eg. Burdwan, Sovabazar

6. Appendix I

alliances,<sup>1</sup> intimate blood relationships,<sup>2</sup> and the declaration of brotherhood by the exchange of pagris.<sup>3</sup>

This microscopic group was further marked out by the favours shown them by the ruling power. They were, as a rule, included in the guest list during state ceremonies, levees and receptions. Their young children were invited to the garden parties held in Government House. Accompanied by their wives and adult children, they attended the Governor's balls and banquets, and were occasionally even called to private luncheons with the Governor or Viceroy. Such occasions were frequently used by the Administration to soothe away any discontentment that they might have.<sup>4</sup> The nobles were granted the right of private entry to the Governor's presence. In the year 1913 the hereditary title holders were issued the right of officially calling on and of receiving an official return visit from the Governor:<sup>5</sup> this increased their feelings of self-importance.

The privileges they received were not only social, but were in many ways concrete and tangible as well. Being a nobleman could mean the right of exemption from

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1. Md.Yousaff + daughter Abdul Gani & half-sister Absanulla; Comilla's son + Serajul Islam's daughter; Nawab Ali + Bogra's daughter; Dighapatia's son + Kassimbazar's daughter; Comilla + Paschimgarin's daughter; Tahirpur's son + Susang's daughter.
  2. Burdwan adopted, real father Ban Bihari Kapur; Mygensingh adopted, real father Muktagacha; Tagore adopted, real father Sourinder Mohan; Reshee Case brother Kristo Das; Wala Qadr Murshidabad's uncle; Md.Yousaff Dacca's uncle; Peary Mohan 1st. cousin Jyot Kumar; Maharani Susang's maternal grandfather Kishori Lal Goswami.
  3. The Englishman: 20 Jan. 1915, p.7. (Dacca-Burdwan)
  4. Carmichael to Hardinge 27 July 1915, C.P.I.:1915 Vol.Va 13, pt.1, p.456b.
  5. The Englishman : 18 Sept.1913, p.6.

attendance in any civil court in British India. Though only a few actually received the honour,<sup>1</sup> the possibility was open to the other members of the group. Moreover, the Government of India had limited by law the maximum fee chargeable on hereditary title holders by Government medical officers.<sup>2</sup> They were also exempted from the Arms Act. The privilege of maintaining arms has always been looked upon in India as the traditional symbol of superiority. The entire mansabdari system was graded according to the amount of armed retainers each mansabdar was allowed to keep in his employment. Unlike the others, the nobles were not required to apply for a licence to purchase arms and ammunition. On purchase, all that they were required to do was inform the District Magistrate of the fact. They were further permitted to distribute the arms amongst their retainers. When the question of the revocation of this privilege came up for review in 1911, the Maharaja of Burdwan, on behalf of the Imperial League, replied that it was highly esteemed by those who enjoyed it, since it was an acknowledgement of their "dignity". Its revocation would lower them in the estimation of the general public.<sup>3</sup>

Inevitably their sense of self-importance, pampered further by social favours shown by the Administration, and special privileges granted for their exclusive use,

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1. Wala Qadr, S.M. Tagore, Naldanga, Dinajpur, Kassimbazar, Dacca, Chakma, Susang, Murshidabad & 3 sons, Burdwan Tagore, Tripura, Cooch Behar. - Cumming to Registrar, High Court Cal. 24 Oct. 1913, B.P.P. Nov. 1913, List of Persons exempted, p.5.
  2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 27 Jan. 1912, p.118
  3. The Englishman: 25 July 1911, p.7.

led them to cultivate living habits different, in degree if not in kind, from other zamindars and from the intelligentsia.<sup>1</sup> At their zamindari head-quarters they lived in palatial buildings, popularly called rajbaris, nawabbaris, and nizamat killa. Both in the structural plans of their mahals, and the living conditions within, an admixture of occidental and oriental tastes prevailed.

Feeling the need to identify themselves with the European rulers, they built their mahals to look like the palatial buildings of the west. The most majestic was that of the Murshidabad family. The Hazar Dwari was completed by 1837, designed and constructed by an English engineer. It was approached by a long flight of steps resembling that of the Government House at Calcutta. At the top of the steps was a large portico, with doric columns which supported an entablature. Inside one came across arched recesses, each with two corinthian columns. There was a state banquet room capable of seating three hundred and fifty guests in the European style. In the large reception room there were a number of cabinets of florentine enlaid wood work. Fine old porcelain, bronzes and china were distributed profusely all around the house. There were also spacious billiard and card rooms.<sup>2</sup> The Nawab of Dacca's residence, Ahsun

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1. Those who received some sort of formal education which qualified them for professional occupations and more routine - clerical and administrative - jobs. In other words, all those who engaged in non-manual occupations. - T.B. Bottomore: Elites & Society, p.70.
  2. The Englishman: 25 July 1911, p.7.

Manzil, built in 1872, was a stately structure, whose public apartments were furnished in the best European style.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan's house plan was drawn by an Italian architect, and followed the line of Italian villas. The Tagore family even christened their homewith an English name: Tagore Castle.<sup>2</sup> The architectural influence apparently was Royal Balmoral. Built in 1896, it was fashioned like a medieval castle. Sovabazar House, though built in the previous century, gave the same impression of an imposing country house of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

The mahals often had large picture galleries. The Murshidabad collection was particularly strong in Dutch, Flemish, French and Italian schools, and was considerably esteemed as one of the finest in India.<sup>4</sup> The Tagore Castle housed pictures by Rubens, Van Dyke, Titian, Reynolds, and Zoffany; they also commissioned artists such as Landseer and Chinnery to paint their own portraits.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that the records and catalogues primarily listed only European works of art, and remained comparatively silent about any Indian or oriental pieces, and even private libraries, such as that of the Murshidabad family numbered more books in European than in Indian languages.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the tendency to identify themselves externally with the tastes and habits of the British

1. E.B.D.G.: Dacca, p.182.
2. 'Note on Bengal Settled Estates Act 1904'; B.R.P.: Feb. 1912, Vol.8939, p.321.
3. D. Doig: An Artist's Impressions, nos.26,31.
4. The Englishman: 19 Feb. 1917, p.12.
5. P.C. Tagore: Catalogue of Paintings & Sculptures in Collection of Maharaja Tagore.
6. The Englishman: 19 Feb. 1917, p.12.



as is apparent from the above examination, Indian features in the internal structure of their houses continued to prevail. Doubtless it was so because of their reluctance to shed many traditions which they had inherited from their forbears of previous regimes. Many of these customs were anachronistic and were ignored outside their own zamindaris. But in their own estates these traditions were zealously retained.

A section of their houses, known as the andar-mahal,<sup>1</sup> was totally segregated from the presence of males other than immediate relatives. If any message was to be given, the male attendant relayed it to a female servant at the dividing door who carried it to the ladies within. At times even ladies of foreign blood were prohibited from entrance to the andar-mahal. If they wished to speak in person, a chair was placed beside a screen behind which the ladies of the house remained. Only after a considerable increase of friendship could they hope to penetrate the intimate chambers and come face to face with the ladies of the family. This was so despite the fact that most of them participated in social life quite openly in Calcutta and other places outside their own zamindaris.<sup>2</sup>

Along with the ladies in the andar-mahal also lived the children of the family.<sup>3</sup> Their lives were carefully supervised by imported or Anglo-Indian governesses. Once more the admixture of the two cultures was noticeable in their upbringing. It was usual for them

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1. For fuller details of life in andar-mahal, read Maharaja Bhupendra Chandra Sinha : Changing Times; pp. 1-12.
  2. Andrew Fraser: Among Indian Rajas & Ryots, p.94.
  3. 'East Beng. & Assam Court of Wards' Lady Asst's. Rep. 1909-10', R & S.D.P.: 1911, Vol.624, File 391, p.36

to be fed on Indian food for lunch and European food for dinner, served in their proper fashions respectively, while wearing the proper style of clothing in accordance with the meal: a method of training for social associations with both sections of the community. Though no sacrilegious food was served within the house, it was pointed out to them that, while attending functions as the guests of others, especially if the host was a praja, they must consume whatever was served, since refusal could hurt the sentiment of the people of less fortunate birth whose household they had graced. It was irrelevant whether the host considered their presence as gracing the occasion or not, for in their own estimation their acceptance to attend was as good as granting a favour. Similarly, while calling on one another, it was left to the host to remember the customs of the guests. If a mistake was committed, the host would be considered ill-bred, and not worthy of being in their "dignified" ranks. During special occasions such as the marriage of a Muslim nobleman, the orthodox members of the Hindu community present, who were prevented from partaking of the Musalman feast, were carefully set apart and offered attar-pan, rose water and garlands of flowers by members of the nawab's family themselves.<sup>1</sup> The Hindu noblemen would follow the same pattern. The Muslim guests would be separately fed with meat, pallao, sweets, etc., prepared to suit their

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1. The Englishman: 30 Apr. 1915, p.7. (Bogra)

customs, and the nobleman would personally look after the guests' comforts.<sup>1</sup> Frequently the occasion was concluded with benedictions by priests of different religious groups residing on the estate.

More often than not the education of the children of such families was carried out in the house by private tutors.<sup>2</sup> They were taught English, Bengali, Sanskrit or Persian, and zamindari management.<sup>3</sup> Even the ones who attended normal schools were trained for zamindari work as soon as they graduated.<sup>4</sup> Along with literary education a great deal of emphasis was placed on the cultivation of correct behaviour and social appearances considered worthy of noblemen. Even very young boys could be seen during public functions clad in cloth of gold and wearing chains of gold filigree studded with jewels, shaking hands with others "with most fascinating dignity".<sup>5</sup> Proper behaviour in kutcheris was considered very important. It was important to be able to differentiate when respect was to be shown to others in keeping with kinship and when in accord with status.<sup>6</sup> Attention was paid to minute details of social behaviour. When slightly mature command of public speaking became an essential item of the curriculum.<sup>7</sup>

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1. The Bengalee: 8 May 1912, p.6. (Narajole)
  2. Ibid: 1 Jan. 1913, p.4.
  3. Practical training was given from a very young age. The young had to sit in kutcheris with their elders, and receive petitions, etc. At such sittings they had to learn proper forms of address and salutations in accord with the petitioner's religion, caste, status, etc. - B.C. Sinha: Changing Times, p.15.
  4. The Englishman: 31 March 1914, p.6. (Washipur).
  5. Ibid: 16 Feb. 1911, p.5. (Darbhanga House party)
  6. B.C. Sinha: Changing Times, p.16.
  7. The Bengalee: 31 March 1912, p.3.

A day of intensive instruction left very little time for play. Children played amongst themselves, since it was considered below their "dignity" to associate with children of prajas and inferior families. It was more common to find them mixing with European children and children of people from the cities than with those of any family residing on the estate. The Tripura family solved the problem by taking new born female children into the household as playmates and bringing them up as members of the family. The kachcha institution, as the system was called, was acknowledged as an honourable one. When the playmates matured into maidenhood they became the female companions of the maharaj kumars. Often children were born of such unions who were addressed as kumars and respected by all as members of the family. Occasionally they even became the most important personality in household affairs,<sup>1</sup> and although the question was never tested in a law court, it was possible for such children even to succeed to the gaddi in the absence of any legitimate heir.

Children brought up in such an exclusive atmosphere unavoidably grew up with a profound sense of self-importance and tended to believe that they were in some way superior to others and, without any outside persuasion, accepted the view that it was right to maintain princely darbars. Hence the difference in the design of their homes from that of the houses of other big zamindars.<sup>2</sup> From the highest point the family flag, traditional or official, was hoisted to inform the prajas that the noble was in residence and

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1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 21 Sept. 1912, p.1131.

2. The andar-mahal was a common feature in the homes of nobles and other zamindars alike.

available for petitions. Every raja and nawab in India had a sheaf of petitions (Darkhasts) presented to him annually.<sup>1</sup> To proclaim general policies and programmes<sup>2</sup> and receive their officers and other important personalities of the estate,<sup>3</sup> darbar chambers were erected. Thus the darbar hall of the nobleman replaced the baithak khana of the zamindar. Though the darbar chamber retained the same lines as the overall Europeanised designs, the ceremonies held within were conducted in the pattern set by previous rulers. On a raised darbar platform in the darbar hall was placed the gaddi. The noblemen appeared in colourful Mughlai costumes, bejewelled head dresses, and bedecked with precious ornaments.<sup>4</sup> They possessed large quantities of jewellery,<sup>5</sup> because, since ancient days, jewellery had been considered a manifestation of affluence, grandeur, importance and authority. The Emperor of India presented it in the same manner as medals in the west. Hence, it was made into property inalienable from the joint holding.

It was customary for the nobleman in darbar to carry a sabre (talwar) studded with precious stones, wrapped in a red cloth as a symbol of authority at peace. In the days when the local chiefs were powers absolute, the removal of the red covering signified a state of war. The ladies of the family usually watched the proceedings

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1. The Englishman: 12 May 1911, p.6. (Sovabazar)
  2. Nat.N.P.: 12 Sept.1914, pp.946,947. (Tagore)
  3. The Englishman: 9 March 1918, p.3. (Burdwan)
  4. Bowring Papers (Illustrations): Vols.I,II,III.
  5. Gov.Gen. to Sec.St. 25 March 1915, R.L.: 1915, Vol.143, File 2021, p.1.

through screened windows from a secluded room attached to the darbar chambers. Extraordinary darbars were also called during birthdays of the nobleman and his heir apparent and on other such occasions. The day would begin with the booming of guns proclaiming the advent of the auspicious day. Some time later a procession would set out comprising elephants, mounted sawars, horses, and carriages with the nobleman's colours at the end.<sup>1</sup> The local towns would be decorated with flags and festoons. Later a darbar would be held where gifts would be presented, nazars offered by eminent personalities of the estate, and suitable speeches made, prayers chanted in the temples, and in the evenings the towns illuminated.<sup>2</sup> It was not unusual to close the day with some theatrical entertainments and musical concerts.<sup>3</sup> To mark such occasions it was common to declare the day a public holiday within the zamindari when Government schools, the collectorate, and municipal and district board offices were closed.<sup>4</sup> Such traditions attributed to noblemen were carefully maintained at the estates.<sup>5</sup>

The nobles received each other in the manner of royal princes. Dressed in full regalia with a

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1. The Bengalee: 4 July 1915, p.2. (Hetampur)
  2. The Englishman: 13 June 1911, p.5. (Nashipur)
  3. The Bengalee: 17 May 1912, p.2 (Nadia)
  4. The Englishman: 20 July 1917, p.4. (Dinajpur)
  5. Outside their estates the traditional Indian ways - noble paraphernalia, life-style, clothes, etiquette, etc. - were not considered essential. That is what has led to the widespread misunderstanding that they were similar to the upper bracket of the bhadralok elite of Calcutta.

deputation of leading personalities<sup>1</sup> of the locality and their senior staff, the host would receive the guest ceremoniously at the station or dock, isolated from the general public for the occasion. That was so despite the fact that neither the railways nor the river ports within British Bengal were in the jurisdiction of the zamindari management. On arrival, the guest would be presented and introduced to the awaiting deputation<sup>2</sup> before being escorted to the mahal by brass bands and private sepoy<sup>3</sup>s amidst cheering crowds. On arrival the visitor would be received at the entrance hall and garlanded by the host and his family before distributing pan-attar to the assembled crowd.<sup>4</sup>

The reception was followed by formal visits and return visits during which customs peculiar to the nobles were noticeable. The newly married Sunity Devee, Maharani of Cooch Behar, was taken aback by the gestures of the Maharani of Burdwan on whom she called during her honeymoon visit to the latter's estate. The old Dowager poured gold coins into the palms of the new bride until they overflowed, to commemorate her reception. Sunity Devee, being used to the normal customs of new brides of bhadraloks receiving gifts and presents (tatto), found the ceremony unusual.<sup>5</sup> Doubtless she soon became adjusted to the new ways and adapted herself totally in the near

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1. The Englishman: 15 Aug. 1916, p.6. (Dacca-Murshidabad)

2. Indian Princess, p.79. (Burdwan-Cooch Behar).

3. The Englishman: 17 Aug. 1911, p.6. (Dacca-Tagore).

4. The Bengalee: 15 Jan. 1911, p.5. (Jyot Kumar Mukerjee-Burdwan).

5. Indian Princess, p.80.

future. Even when the nobles corresponded with each other, they made it a practice to use specially prepared dusted papers.<sup>1</sup>

In the same manner the nobles received senior dignitaries of British India, often being favoured by formal visits from Governors and Viceroy.<sup>2</sup> The visitor would be received in regal splendour, frequently with an elephant procession marking the occasion. The dignitary would be seated in a massive silver and gold howdah, and head the procession of half a dozen or so elephants with retainers in liveries, carrying spears and maces, leading the way. Often brass bands would accompany the procession. A huge umbrella would be attached to the main howdah to signify the visitor's eminence.<sup>3</sup> At times the household sepoy were used as guards of honour, and the route would be lined with chobdars and paiks.<sup>4</sup> Later in the day the visitor would be formally called upon, who in his turn would return the visit in due course.<sup>5</sup> Receptions and parties would follow with a small darbar being the climax of the occasion. A marquee was raised on the mahal lawn with a ceremonial chair for the visitor to sit on. All the eminent people of the locality appeared to pay their respects to him. Police bands played the national anthem, speeches were read, and assurances of loyalty

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1. Natore to Bowring 9 June 1860, Bowring Papers: Vol.III, p.127.

2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 23 Nov. 1912, p.1371.

3. Bengal Diary 1917-19: Zetland, Vol I, p.63.(Dhanbaria)

4. The Bengalee: 2 July 1912, p.1. (Kakina)

5. B.C. Sinha : Changing Times, pp. 16-17.



to the Crown voiced.<sup>1</sup> In the evening functions and entertainments, consisting of dances, theatrical performances and musical soirees were held to mark the occasion. If the host was a Muslim nobleman, the guests could even be amused by cock-fights and bull-fights.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from maintaining establishments at the various estates, the nobles generally kept residents at provincial headquarters<sup>3</sup> and popular hill stations.<sup>4</sup> Since they were exempted from the Arms Act and were allowed to employ retainers, the mahals and the grounds were patrolled by armed sentries carrying both offensive and defensive weapons. They were of various ranks and technically had varied functions but, in reality, were general watchmen guarding the property. The Burdwan estate military establishment, as it was called, comprised sawars (horsemen), nazirs (swordsmen), paiks (lancers), sepoys (gunmen), and mahuts (elephant riders). There existed a hierarchy of officers designated havildar, jamadar, subedar, in respective seniority, with a bakhshi with overall control. The arms were kept in an armoury in the charge of an officer called rishi. The Dhanbaria retainers comprised spearmen, mace-bearers and mahuts.<sup>5</sup> The Kakina establishment had household sepoys with jamadars and havildars in charge of them and contingents of chobdars and paiks.<sup>6</sup> The

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1. European Residents of Hatwa Raj to Lieut. Gov. 3 July 1910, R.L.: 1910, Vol.134, File 3015, enclo.C, pp.5,6.
  2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 24 Feb.1913, p.238. (Dacca)
  3. Calcutta & Dacca.
  4. Darjeeling, Kurseong, etc.
  5. Bengal Diary 1917-19: Zetland, Vol.I, p.63.
  6. The Bengalee: 2 July 1912, p.1.

Nawab of Dacca even had a band of his own. <sup>1</sup>

From the above examination of their life style and privileges, it becomes apparent that the nobles of Bengal formed a status group as defined by Max Weber. Their refusal to associate on equal terms with the rest of society was evidence of a desire to preserve a way of life, which at one time embodied the genuine values of the political class in Indian political life. As an economic class they belonged to the body of Bengal zamindars. But this economic determination did not exhaust the conditions of their group formation. In contrast to the class situation there existed a status situation in which the typical component of their values was determined by a specific estimation of honour. Their status honour was expressed by the fact that they demanded a specific style of life from fellow members belonging to the circle; a circle made nearly impossible to penetrate by their spokesman, the Title Committee. Linked with that expectation were restrictions on social intercourse. Stratification of status went hand in hand with the glorification of the ideal of "dignity." Beside the specific status honour, which rested upon distance and exclusiveness, other material monopolies were also visible. Such honorific preferences consisted of wearing the Mughlai costumes, and the privilege of donning the robe of honour, carrying the talwar wrapped in red cloth, presiding

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1. Gov.Gen. to Crewe 5 Oct. 1911, F.L. : 1911, Vol.443, Lt.no.236, enclo. pp.2.3.

over ceremonial darbars, receiving each other and visiting dignitaries in state, maintaining arms and employing retainers, having the right of private entree to the Governor's Palace, special medical benefits, special seating arrangements in state ceremonies, and being exempted from attendance of civil courts and compliance with the Arms Act. They were grouped together by their prestige, a feeling of superiority, the conviction that they were true noblemen, and specific ideas of correct noble behaviour, leading to a specific way of life. Their actions were orientated primarily by the feeling of belonging together over and above the rest of the community: an awareness of being considered more "dignified" than others.

CHAPTER II.THE PATRIARCHS.

By the twentieth century the nobles had been deprived of all political authority and were virtually degraded from being the governing class of the province. Their function had come to be confined to the collection of rent from their tenants, strictly regulated by the Bengal Tenancy Acts, and the supplying of revenue to the Government, in accordance with the Permanent Settlement regulations. In other words, they were of no more consequence than any other zamindar in the eyes of the law. Nor did they have the advantage which the British nobility possessed of being a hereditary part of the legislative machinery of the country. Moreover, their exclusive habits frequently led the articulate intelligentsia to maintain that their lives were spent in fruitless leisure in a rarified atmosphere remote from ordinary life. Thus, both from a legal point of view and as members of the Bengal community, they were apparently of no value as noblemen. Yet, despite their apparent insignificance, we find the Government singling them out, granting them preferential treatment, and generally pampering them like spoilt children.

The Government's behaviour appears more illogical in the light of the prevalent political climate in the province. If political expediency required the delicate handling of any particular

group, one would expect it to be the articulate intelligentsia, led by renowned leaders like Surendranath Banerjea, Bhupendranath Basu, Ambica Charan Majumdar, Rash Behari Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Arobindo Ghose, Fazlul Huq, A. Rasul, and other such prominent political figures. They were the recognised leaders of the educated public, and challenged the practice of alien domination in the country. When the British Administration relied heavily on the nobles to make the Royal Reception a success, on the ground that the large landholders were the true leaders of the people, there ensued a furore from a large section of the Indian press against the decision. It was repeatedly pointed out that the rajas and nawabs carried little weight with the people, and had no right to the pretence of leadership of Bengal society. According to the Bengalee, "in India men of education are the friends and guides of the poor who form the overwhelming portion of the population of the country".<sup>1</sup> The Nayak in a more adamant tone asserted that "we are not in touch with Rajas and Maharajas, we are not of the class of toadies or darbaris..... The Anglo-Indian papers talk of the people of the country organizing these Receptions. Who are the people of the country then? Is the Maharaja of Burdwan or Maharaja Tagore of Naptepara to be understood by

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1. Nat. owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 1 June 1912,  
p.338.

that term? Do they mix with the people of the country, listen to what they say?"<sup>1</sup> The Pallivasi maintained that they did not urge the exclusion of "Aristocrats" from the Royal Reception, but suggested that the "middle classes" had the right to take the leading part in it.<sup>2</sup> The nobles, on the other hand, claimed that the zamindars, of whom they were the leading members, were the "natural leaders" of the people. To assess the validity of the nobles' claim, it is necessary at the very beginning to examine the extent of truth in the claim of the intelligentsia that it was they who were in direct touch with the general public, or, as the Bengalee put it, that they were the "friends and guides" of the poor, while the nobles lived in ignorance of their needs in a world totally detached from the rest of society.

An overall analysis of the contemporary press reports brings to light the fact that the Indian press itself was divided in its views. All contemporary journals did not hold the same opinion as the Bengalee, the paper that reflected the view of Surendranath Banerjea's group. Some papers were not convinced by the contention of the leaders of the intelligentsia that they represented the interests of the general public. The journals advocating the retention of traditional Indian views quite rejected their claim to general leadership. The most outspoken, the Nayak, accused them of not caring for

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1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 15 Apr. 1911, pp.427,428.

2. Ibid: week ending 29 Apr. 1911, p.497.

the multitude but of using that as an excuse for furthering the prospects of the small educated community:

"Bhupendranath and Surendranath are self-constituted leaders of the country. They do not keep themselves informed of what is going on in the country, nor understand the feelings of its inhabitants. They simply want to extend the scope of the activity of the educated community".<sup>1</sup> Carmichael gave emphatic support to the same view in a speech to the students of Dacca.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental reason for such views was not far to seek. The leaders of the group were undoubtedly men of considerable ability. But like most Indians, they too avoided mixing with people considered socially inferior, and so their activities were restricted to the educated community. To this day, social separation due to status consciousness is a predominant characteristic of the Indian temperament. It was more so in the early part of the century. Bhupendranath Basu quite frankly confessed in an interview with the Manchester Guardian, "My brief experience of the English working people has been a great eye-opener to me. I have mixed with them very freely, and I have gone about in crowds in a way I should not have dreamed of doing in my own country".<sup>3</sup> Social association and actual identification with the crowd was relatively unknown before the emergence of Ghandi as the national

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1. Nat.W.P.: week ending 15 June 1912, p.657; - According to the 1921 Census out of a total population of 47,592,462 there were only 4322645 literate people of which only 778,932 knew English. - Census 1921 : Bengal, Vol.V, pt.2, p.70.
  2. The Englishman: 31 Jan.1916, p.8.
  3. Ibid: 31 July 1911, p.7.

leader of India. Thus both the groups were primarily exclusive. The difference lay in the attitude towards the exclusiveness.

The nobles and their fellow zamindars, unlike the leaders of the intelligentsia, made no pretence of being part of the general public. On the contrary, they argued that direct association on an equal basis with the people would diminish their position and influence as the "natural leaders" of the society. Their attitude was well illustrated by Maharaja Tagore's remarks as spokesman of the British Indian Association. He said that "these great zamindars actuated as they are by oriental ideas of social dignity would consider themselves greatly humiliated if they were forced to canvass for votes among their subordinate tenure holders, tenants, retainers and persons of inferior status. If by any chance they may be obliged to stoop to such infamous practices, their position would be lowered in the eyes of the people, their influence greatly reduced and their sphere of usefulness become extremely limited."<sup>1</sup> Words such as 'great', 'social dignity', 'humiliated', 'inferior status', 'stoop', 'infamous', speak volumes on the subject of the opinion they had of themselves. Though they may be condemned for having such an obviously inflated sense of arrogance, the fact remains that neither the nobles nor the leaders of the intelligentsia, who claimed that they were not status conscious like the nobles, had any direct touch with the

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1. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power',  
J.A.S.: Feb. 1962, p.172.



people at large. It would not be wrong to conclude that in Bengal the method of contact between the two primary status groups claiming leadership and the general public was through indirect processes. On personal capacity and reputation, rather than direct communication, depended their influence over the public.

The zamindars as a class have for generations been reputed to be exploiters, tyrants, and primarily disinterested in public welfare. Contemporary literature emphasised the point by using the zamindar tyrant as a favourite theme. It was of this economic class that the nobles formed the prominent status group.

The novelists' portrayal of the landed nobles as extortionists was corroborated by other authoritative sources. The Report on Survey and Settlement Operations for 1913 stated that the big landholders had been found to be the worst offenders against the section of the Bengal Tenancy Act limiting the enhancement of rent. Referring to the Bhowal estate, it stated that illegal enhancement had been superimposed on illegal cesses to a large extent. The report extenuated the Natore and Dighapatia estates by pointing out that on the whole they were well managed.<sup>1</sup> But only a couple of years later, in a letter to the editor of the Muhammadi, the Dighapatia estate was accused of exacting abwabs from the tenants of Noakhali at the rate of four annas on the rupee on the occasion of the marriage of the eldest son of the

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1. The Englishman: 2 Apr. 1914, p.7.

Raja.<sup>1</sup>

As with the novels and official reports, the newspapers were also full of adverse comments. The Rayat complained that the law prohibited the enhancement of rent at a rate higher than two annas on the rupee, but enhancement was sometimes made even up to eight annas or more, and rayats deliberately injured by false measurements of the holdings. The principal offenders were the bigger and better known zamindars rather than the small talukdars, maintained the same paper.<sup>2</sup> The Prasun drew a dismal picture of the conditions of the rayats in the Burdwan estate. Most of it was farmed out to patnidars and dar-patnidars "who screw the last penny they can from their poor rayats". If rents fell into arrears, heavy interest was charged at the rate of eight annas per rupee. Illegal cesses were also extorted almost every year.<sup>3</sup> The Bangavasi received a complaint from certain rayats of the Sunderganj Bandar Estate of the Raja of Tajhat, making serious allegations against some of the local amlas.<sup>4</sup> The Islam Ravi accused Rani Dinamani Chaudhurani of Santosh of allowing her naib to oppress the Muslim tenants in various ways.<sup>5</sup> The Moslem Hitaishi reported that Maharaja Tagore turned a blind eye

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1. Ind.N.P.: week ending 6 May 1916, p.633.

2. Ibid: week ending 13 Nov.1913, p.1632.

3. Ibid: week ending 15 Feb. 1913, p.160.

4. Ibid: week ending 21 June 1913, p.559.

5. Ibid: week ending 9 Jan. 1915, p.51.

to the oppression committed by his manager of Sarai-kandi Zamandari in the shape of exacting presents, begar (unpaid labour), and nazar (financial offerings).<sup>1</sup>

Writing about the Maharaja of Kassimbazar, the same paper at an earlier date reported that the Jotedars in the Baharband Taluk of the Maharaja were levying illegal cesses on the tenants of the Maharaja with his consent, ostensibly for the purpose of paying the money to the Maharaja as a present, but in reality for their own benefit.<sup>2</sup>

Dhan Mahmud in a letter to the editor of the above paper accused the Raja of Mymensingh of the most outrageous oppression. He wrote, "At about 1 or 2 o'clock on the night of Wednesday, the fourth of Baishak last, the Deputy Manager of the Raja Sasi Kanta Acharyya ... accompanied by four elephants and countless armed lathials attacked my house... The four elephants utterly trampled down the six rooms of my house and the lathials damaged and threw away my stocks of paddy, rice, jute, clothes, utensils. The elephants killed many of my goats. Minhazuddin peon struck my younger brother with a sword. He is in a precarious condition. The Raja's lathials are keeping watch on me; there is no telling when they may kill me."<sup>3</sup>

From such evidence one might conclude that they

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1. Ind.N.P. : week ending 12 Sept. 1914, p.946.
  2. Ibid. : week ending 24 Jan. 1914, p.70.
  3. Ibid. : week ending 13 June, 1914, p.570

had no right to pose as leaders of the community. Doubtless nobody would be willing without coercion to be led or influenced by people of such calibre. Yet, keeping in mind that the franchise was limited to the "educated" and the "well-to-do", the election results of 1912 gives some support to the nobles' claims to leadership. Surendranath Banerjea's group had captured or could expect support from the municipality seats only. The results showed that most of the members returned to the Legislative Council were zamindars. Out of those returned, three out of five District and Local Boards representing rural Bengal, the landholders' constituencies, and the Indian commercial community were represented by noblemen. Moreover, out of the five Muslim seats, one went to a nobleman, while another went to a nominee of the Nawab of Dacca.<sup>1</sup>

The election results reflecting the inclinations of the rural population,<sup>2</sup> the commercial community and the Muslim Bengalis show that, despite their reputation as oppressive zamindars the nobles had far greater influence over the local people than the contemporary leaders of the intelligentsia. Apparently the latter's influence was localised in the cities and the urban areas maintaining municipalities only. That was so because their efforts were directed primarily towards the uplift of

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1. Discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.
  2. See Appendix IV for the electorate of District and Local Boards who in their turn elected the Legislative Councillors.

the educated community, equal opportunity for the educated Indian in services with the British, and struggle for political power with the Administration.<sup>1</sup> Until the emergence of C.R. Das in the political life of Bengal, the rural population was largely ignored by them as being insignificant. The nobles, on the other hand, derived their economic strength and political prestige from the support of agricultural Bengal. The province was predominantly agricultural, with a population of about 46,700,000<sup>2</sup>, of which the urban section comprised only 2,500,000<sup>3</sup> or so. Moreover, out of the above total figure, approximately 25,000,000 were Muslims<sup>4</sup> whose ranks comprised even less urbanized intelligentsia than the Hindus. Furthermore, the importance of the city where the intelligentsia had the largest influence not only rested on its municipal life but also on its commercial activities. All three - the rural, Muslim and commercial community - had given their confidence to noblemen and their fellow zamindars.

Leadership of rural Bengal must not be belittled as insignificant on the grounds that the majority comprised indifferent agriculturists who would not participate in the political life of the time. The nineteenth century had proved that they also could, if aggravated, become a turbulent element

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1. S.N. Banerjea: Various resolutions described.

2. Census 1921: Bengal, Vol.V, pt.2, p.125.

3. J.H. Broomfield, p.5.

4. Census 1921: Bengal, Vol.V, pt.2, p.175.

affecting the political stability of the province. The disturbances of Titu Mir (1830), of the Faraizis (1836), of the indigo rayats (1859), of the East Bengal rayats (1866), and the riots at Pabna (1872) and at Rajshahi-Dinajpur (1882) had been proof manifest of the above fact.<sup>1</sup> As early as the 1870s reference can be found to the British awareness of the agriculturists' potential power if they combined together.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Administration's interest in the agricultural community was implied by the Civil Servants' claim to be the guardians of the peasants of India. Indeed, to forget the potential strength of people who, both men and women, were capable of working in waist-deep water from sun rise to sun set, day in and day out, with a minimum amount of food and in sub-human living conditions would have been folly. The bhadralok were capable of sporadic terrorist activities but such a peasantry could doubtless sustain the attrition of a guerilla movement for years under the most taxing conditions.

A large section of that population, residing in rural Bengal, continued to respect the nobles, although they had been superseded as the political class, had gained a derogatory reputation amongst a large section of the intelligentsia, and had preserved exclusive habits despite the decline of the Mughal nobility. There were many and varied reasons for

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1. List supplied by Dr. Mohar Ali.

2. P. Sinha: Nineteenth Century Bengal, p.26.

this apparently contradictory phenomenon. One was that the local nobleman could be easily identified as one of themselves by the rural people. The Bengalis tended to live out their lives, generation after generation, in their ancestral districts. The Census reports of 1911 and 1921 show that only 8.7% and 9.8% respectively of the Indian population lived outside the district of their birth. Kingsley Davis points out that even those low figures were probably exaggerated.<sup>1</sup> Often it was easier to trace older connections of the peasantry with a village than that of the landlord himself.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, for the majority of Bengalis, until today, the word desh neither meant the country as it should if translated literally, nor the province, but the village or district of the speaker's origin. Even for many who had established residence in the city, their bari (home) continued to be the ancestral home, while the city dwelling was their basha (shelter).<sup>3</sup> Thus the interest and affiliations of the common man tended to revolve within the limits of his desh, rather than with the larger concept of the province or the nation. In that desh the people in whom was vested the legal authority changed with the expiry of their term in office; the political leaders from the city came and went at periodic intervals, but the nobleman and his descendants

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1. R. Bendix: Max Weber, p.151 fn.

2. L.R.C.: Vol.III, p.62.

3. P. Sinha: Nineteenth Century Bengal, p.11.

remained with them generation after generation in the same manner as themselves.

In that small area, the zamindar and his predecessors had been the karta or malik for centuries. Their authority had previously enveloped not only the land of the locality but also the inhabitants who resided on it. Anand Ram Mukhlis, an official of Muhammad Shah's court, wrote in the Mirat-al Istilak that a zamindar meant a person who was the malik of the land of a village or township. Thus, unlike the ordinary agriculturist, his right extended over not only the land but also the people who resided on it. For this privilege he paid a fixed sum of revenue, and then made collections called malikana from individual peasants at high rates fixed by custom or by himself. An eighteenth century glossary of revenue terms, compiled by an official familiar with the practice of Bengal, informs us that the malikana was the right of the zamindar. It became so that in the eyes of the common man payment of state revenue meant payment to the malik. Moreover, his military contingents and fortresses symbolised his resolution to defend the land from external aggression and maintain internal law and order.<sup>1</sup> Thus for centuries, in the eyes of the local people, the zamindar was nothing short of the actual sovereign of the desh. Some territories, for example those of the zamindar of Bishnupur and the chiefs of Cooch Behar and Tripura, were so inaccessible that even the powerful Mughal Subedar, Murshid Quli Khan, left them unmolested,

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1. Irfan Habib: Agrarian System of Mughal India, pp.140,145,146,158,163,



allowing them to be nothing less than real kings in their localities.<sup>1</sup> It resulted in the belief that the zamindar embodied all the authority of the state, rather than held his authority as the delegated subordinate of the paramount power. It is apparent from contemporary literature that the zamindar and his successors were set apart by the inhabitants and treated as though endowed with exceptional qualities: qualities inaccessible to ordinary persons and regarded as exemplary.<sup>2</sup> The qualities were further magnified in the case of a zamindar with a noble title: a title which had been identified with rulers in India from antiquity. To a Muslim the title nawab was further sanctified, since it was closely identified with the Amir amongst them: the Amir who was to be given due respect in accord with the Prophet's injunction.

Traditional domination in their own locality automatically followed and continued even after the noblemen had been divested of all political authority. It was a product of custom or usage resting on long familiarity or habit.<sup>3</sup> A habit so old is never discarded easily, especially in such countries with truly old civilizations which have strongly established traditional social institutions.<sup>4</sup> The zamindar nobleman's position

1. A. Karim: Murshid Quli Khan, p.78.
2. Weber applied the term charisma to a certain quality of an individual by virtue of which he is set apart and treated as endowed with exceptional qualities. These are not accessible to ordinary persons but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual is treated with deference. Frequently his descendants continue to generate the same awe which leads to traditional domination. - R. Bendix: Max Weber, pp.88 fn., 304, 305, 309.
3. Traditional authority is "the authority whose legitimization is based on some such justification as 'since time immemorial', or 'since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary' - J.E. Golatacorpe: An Introduction to Sociology, p. 157.
4. T.B. Bottomore: Nature & Types of Sociological Theory, p.289.

became sanctified by tradition, transmitting a depersonalised charisma to the man on the gaddi, thereby allowing him to maintain traditional authority. This quality remained unimpaired even after the loss of substantive political authority, due to the retention of all extraneous features of the old baronial houses explained in the previous chapter. Even then the false aura might have atrophied had not the British converted their offices into proprietary rights over the area in their charge. The result was that the inhabitants of the locality were constantly aware of the existence of a raj, a raja, rajbaris, raj darbars, raj kutcheris, raj naibs, raj sepoys, and so on. The deception was accentuated by the fact that the rent paid was called khajna, which associated it with the State's revenue. Moreover, the Government continued to address them as maliks in their khatians<sup>1</sup>, and ancient terms like maliker malikana continued to exist in estate management terminology until the very end. Such attitudes were further strengthened by the Government's measures on such exceptional occasions as births and deaths in the noble households. It was not unusual to declare public mourning at the time of death, or public celebration at times of birth, as though they were in fact the rulers, or, at least, of some political importance. Under such circumstances, not only the zamindari establishments

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1. McAlpin to Sec. Rev. Dept. Beng. 17 June 1913, B.R.P.: July 1913, Vol. 9157, p. 43; khatian = official notifications and correspondences, and proprietary deeds.

would close but also the civil and criminal courts, the <sup>1</sup>kutcheris, the collectorate, <sup>2</sup>and the offices and schools <sup>3</sup>run by the Government. Sociologists have pointed out that the legitimization of traditional domination occurs whenever obedience is given on the basis of established usage. It ultimately becomes as routine as the father's authority over his household. <sup>4</sup>It had become so in the case of the nobles of Bengal in pre-Independence India.

Though the basis of traditional authority and depersonalised charismatic influence may be found in their historical emergence, their high-sounding titles, <sup>5</sup>and the lack of population mobility, the reason for its continuance has to be sought elsewhere. A nebulous figure with exclusive habits would not be able to exert patriarchal dominance for long by mere psychological means. It was essential to remain in the public eye and provide benefits for the people which to some degree would tilt the balance of opinion in their favour, and mitigate their reputation as extortionists, or else face the consequence of gradually sinking into oblivion.

The nobles' behavioural pattern examined in the previous chapter shows that they were consciously attempting to preserve a way of life that had been established by their predecessors. Such being the case, it is necessary to make a quick representative survey of the activities

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1. The Bengalee: 4 Sept. 1912, p.1. (Natore)
  2. The Englishman: 20 July 1917, p.4. (Dinajpur)
  3. Telegram from Comm.Dacca 16 Jan. 1915, B.P.P.: Feb.1915, Vol.9647, p.17 (Dacca)
  4. R. Bendix: Max Weber, p.332
  5. Maharajadhiraj Bahadur conveyed the suggestion that such a title holder was emperor or king of kings rather than a mere zamindar.

of their forbears before proceeding to see how the traditions thus established came to serve the current nobles as a means of remaining within the realm of public awareness.

From the annals of the eighteenth century we find that Raja Sitaram Rai of Bhusna was a renowned Zamindar nobleman. He built the city of Hariharnager and adorned it with a tank, a number of temples and other public buildings. He did the same at his capital, Muhammadpur. Out of the temples he erected, the Dhol Mandir and the temple of Krishna and Balaram were most notable. He patronised Hindu sages and Sanskrit scholars, giving to them large endowments. On the occasion of Dolyatra and Rathyatra, he used to distribute large sums to the poor and the destitute.

After the rebellion of Raja Sitaram the nizamat authorities dispossessed him of his estates which were handed over to Ramjiban Rai, the ancestor of the current Raja of Natore. The reputation of the Natore family reached its peak during the time of the Rani Bhavani. She patronised the Hindu religion by bestowing stipends on the Brahmins and on places of worship. She constructed numerous tanks, wells, roads, and charitable institutions. During the great famine of 1770 she opened free kitchens in different parts of her zamindari and, aside from this, purchased food grains at great expense and sold them at lower prices in the famine stricken areas.

Another renowned contemporary was Raja Krishna Chandra, the ancestor of the current Raja of Nadia. He promoted art and literature and at his court gathered some of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of the time to whom he made large endowments. The famous clay models of Krishnagar and the fine cotton industry of Santipur owe their develop-

ment to the patronage of the Raja.

Raja Krishna Chandra's fame in Hindu society was closely challenged by Raja Rajvallav of Vikrampur. Like the Watore and Nadia families' patronage towards their own Brahmin caste, Rajvallav in turn patronised the Vaidya society. Under him the Vaidyas grew prosperous and powerful. Being a keen social reformer he gave protection to Hindu widows and sincerely tried to persuade the Hindu pandits in 1756 to sanction remarriage of minor widows. He was a great patron of the artisans and the craftsmen and took a personal interest in their well-being. He was also a great builder and gave considerable impetus to the architectural development in Bengal in the mid-eighteenth century. His court too was adorned with gifted poets and scholars.

It should not be thought that the traditions of the nobles were restricted merely to the Hindu families. The Muslim noblemen also followed a similar pattern. Badiul Zaman of Birbhum used to spend Rs.140,000 annually on religion, education and stipends to poor scholars and sages. He also built numerous tanks and mosques in his zamindari.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we find that the zamindar noblemen of this earlier era set a pattern which had received the stamp of tradition and had come to be acknowledged as the proper behaviour for nobles. They were expected to beautify their own territories, develop irrigation and the supply of water by digging tanks and wells in their own zamindaris, erect and maintain temples and mosques

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1. A.C. Roy: History of Bengal, pp.357,358, 360-363.

where the devout, the poor, the old, and the destitute could find sanctuary, patronise education, arts, and crafts, help relieve the distressed during famine, and take an active interest in the well being of their caste groups in particular, and social reforms in general.

Over and above the traditions the nobles sought to preserve, they aspired to greater titles and elevation in their own hierarchy. Such aspirations could only be achieved by being able to convince the Authorities that they were indeed worthy landlords. Thus the nobles had a dual incentive to maintain social services. In many ways the nobles retained a prominent position in the public consciousness despite their reluctance to associate with the people at large.

As the premier landlords, the nobles were obviously considered their leaders by the other zamindars of Bengal. They dominated all the associations and societies dealing with zamindari interests.<sup>1</sup> Their inter-locking interests were further strengthened by marriage alliances, blood relationships, and pagri exchanges. Apart from concrete unions, their class cohesion resulted in one coming to the rescue of a zamindar in times of stress.<sup>2</sup> On occasions one even managed and maintained the estates of another as trustee.<sup>3</sup> The size of their landholdings and their position within their class convinced the Government

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1. Discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 1 July 1911, p.784.

3. Bengal Zamindars, p.3.

of the need to acknowledge them as leaders of the zamindari class which is made obvious by the fact that the Government frequently felt it adequate simply to consult them alone, along with the associations dominated by them, on questions that involved the entire class.<sup>1</sup> The zamindars as a body owned 86% of the total area of Bengal,<sup>2</sup> of which a very large portion belonged to the nobles themselves. Their position with their class was of such high standing that Maharaja Tagore could be presumptuous enough to say that he pledged the loyalty of all the zamindars to the British Raj in the inaugural gathering of the Great War Conference held at Government House.<sup>3</sup>

Often it has been suggested that ownership did not give the privilege of leadership to the zamindars, since they were absentee landlords. The point that is left unclarified is that for the nobles, at least, the word did not signify living away from their estates. Their zamindaris were not consolidated holdings but were scattered over the province and, sometimes, even beyond the provincial boundaries. The properties of eminent nobles such as Maharaja Tagore and the Maharaja of Kassimbazar might well be located in ten to fourteen different districts of Bengal and the neighbouring provinces.<sup>4</sup> It was not possible for the superior landholders to be present in the various holdings personally at all times. Doubtless the Maharaja of Burdwan, living at Burdwan, was an absentee landlord to his prajas

1. Birly to 13 nobles & 8 associations 10 May 1916, B.R.P.: May 1916, Vol.9898, p.61.

2. The Englishman: 4 June 1918, p.6.

3. Ibid.

4. Chiefs, Rajas & Zamindars, pp.199,200,327,337.

at Kujang estate<sup>1</sup> located on the sea coast at Orissa. It could not be otherwise. Official reports have helped to cloud the issue by denominating such cases as absentee landlords<sup>2</sup> on a par with those landlords and large tenure holders who were truly absentee, in that their income and prestige from the land were supplementary to their primary occupation.<sup>3</sup> A Lieutenant-Governor describing the latter type of landholder explained that "the Bengali barrister, lawyer, official, litterateur, trader, while following diligently his calling in the city, contrives to acquire his bit of land".<sup>4</sup> This was not so in the case of the nobles. The normal practice amongst them was to have a single estate headquarter which acted as the nerve centre for the entire zamindari. It was there that people like the Maharajas of Nashipur and Dinajpur the Rajas of Chakdighi and Maldunga, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee<sup>5</sup>, and the Raja of Hetampur<sup>6</sup> lived. The Nawabs of Murshidabad and Dacca, the Maharaja of Burdwan, and the Raja of Kakina also spent most of their time in their estate headquarters.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the Tagore, Paikpara, and the Law families, preferred to remain in the provincial capital for the major part of the year. But it must be kept in mind that Puthuriaghata, Paikpara, and 24

Parganas, the headquarters of the three respectively,

1. 'Restoration of Land to Burdwan Raj', B.R.P.: Apr.1912, Vol.8939, p.12.
2. 'Quinquennial Report of Brudwan Div. 1905-10', B.G.P.: Sept.1911, Vol.8677, p.87.
3. L.R.C.: Vol.V, p.238.
4. A. Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism, p.53.
5. Addresses Presented at Cal.: Montagu, Vol.34. Biographical points on members of deputations and memorialists.
6. 'Rep.Survey & Settlement', B.R.P.: Apr.1916, Vol.9898, p.125.
7. The Englishman: 'Indian Events-Bengal Presidency' and 'By the Way' columns.



were all parts of greater Calcutta and have become parts of the city by now. The ones who remained away from their estates were the exceptions rather than the rule. Summing up the above view, the Bengal Landholders Association pointed out to the Land Revenue Commission 1938 that "most of the big zamindars are residents but they can reside in one place only while the zamindaris are very much scattered and cover a wide area...." <sup>1</sup>

Other advocates of the absentee landlord theory maintain that the word did not signify physical absence but the absence of interest. How far they lacked interest is difficult, if not impossible, to assess. That they lacked all interest in their estates when their income, well being, and prestige depended on it does not seem feasible. The Chief Manager of Tagore estate pointed out to the Land Revenue Commission 1938 that "they are generally alert to their own interests as well as to the interest of their tenants, they keep all informations about the tenantry that is required ...." <sup>2</sup>

The nobles themselves made frequent remarks that the interests of the tenants were very close to their hearts as their mutual interests, both in prosperity and adversity, were correlated. <sup>3</sup> After all their lots were cast with their tenants. <sup>4</sup> Byomkesh Chakrovarty, speaking for himself and Raja Reshee Case Law to their prajas stated, "If you are prosperous our collections are better, if you are in distress our collections may entirely cease and we may have to pass anxious time ...."

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1. L.R.C: Vol.III, p.63.

2. Ibid: Vol.V, p.422.

3. The Englishman: 28 Aug. 1911, p.5. (Tagore)

4. The Bengalee: 15 Aug. 1913, p.2. (Santosh)

It is obvious therefore your interest is our interest, your joys are our joys, your sorrows our sorrows. It therefore necessarily follows that it would be foolish of us if we did not combine and cooperate for our common good, and our common advantage."<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja of Nashipur attended kutcheri regularly from eleven to five to supervise the day to day work of the estate staff and toured the various estates in the winter months to discuss with his subordinates the possibilities of any improvement.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Tripura also toured his estates periodically to discuss various questions of local importance and to grant his prajas interviews. Moreover, he appointed a mixed commission of leading officials and one non-official to examine the finances of the zamindaris.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Maharaja Tagore toured his estates and met the tenantry in public receptions, drawing crowds as large as four to five thousand people.<sup>4</sup> The tours were utilised to receive petitions from the residents and local institutions seeking financial assistance and redress from grievances.<sup>5</sup> The Maharajas of Mymensingh<sup>6</sup> and Natore<sup>7</sup> and Raja of Muktagacha<sup>8</sup> also drew crowds of thousands during their tours round their estates. The Maharaja of Burdwan, assisted by Raja Ban Bihari Kapur, managed to streamline and reform the administration of

1. The Bengalee: 14 Feb. 1912, p.5.

2. D.C. Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, p.199.

3. 'Report 1911-12', I.S.A.R.: Tripura 1909-19, Vol.17, pp.3,4.

4. The Englishman: 25 Aug. 1911, p.5.

5. Ibid: 12 May 1911, p.6.

6. Ibid: 26 Aug. 1912, p.3.

7. The Bengalee: 2 Sept.1911. p.2.

8. Ibid: 12 Sept. 1912, p.1.

the Burdwan estate.<sup>1</sup> The Kumar of Paikpara was considered an authority on estate management during his time.<sup>2</sup> Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee was such a stringent zamindar that he gained the reputation of being a "hard landlord".<sup>3</sup> Nawab Syed Mohammed Ali Chaudhury was considered one of the best zamindars of the time<sup>4</sup> and the Raja of Chanchal was acknowledged as a model landlord.<sup>5</sup> The Raja of Chakdighi took great interest in village institutions and was reputed to be a good landlord.<sup>6</sup> The Raja of Naldunga was praised for his sympathetic treatment of his tenants.<sup>7</sup> As for the Maharaja of Kassimbazar, even as eminent a nationalist leader as Surendranath Banerjea pointed out that he was a zamindar beyond criticism.<sup>8</sup> Apparently the tribal chieftains were also not far behind their fellow nobles. About the Chakma Raja, the Superintendent of Chottagong Hill Tracts wrote that " he has proved himself to be an excellent administrator",<sup>9</sup> while the Commissioner of Chittagong Division stated that "the Mông chief is just as good an administrator as the Chakma chief".<sup>10</sup> If the above data is to be accepted as representative examples of the nobles' behaviour pattern as zamindars, it is not entirely correct to suggest that

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1. I.B.D.: p.71.
  2. Catalogue of Books (Bengal): 1915-23
  3. Addresses Presented at Cal.: Montagu, Vol.34.
  4. Biographical detail preceding his memorandum.  
Carmichael to Hardinge 7 Nov. 1913, C.P.I.: Vol.Val10, 1913, pt.I, p.401.
  5. Gourlay to DuBoulay 15 March 1916, Ibid: 1916, Vol.Val5, pt.I, p.180.
  6. Addresses Presented at Cal.: Montagu, Vol.34.  
Biographical detail preceding his memorandum.
  7. 'Quinquennial Report of Presidency Div.1905-10', B.G.P.: Apr.1911, Vol.8677, p.598.
  8. The Englishman: 22 July 1911, p.3.
  9. Fisher to Sec.Pol, Dept.E.Beng. 22 Apr.1911, B.P.P.: March 1913, Vol.9146, p.33.
  10. Lang to Chief Sec.Beng. 25 May 1915, B.P.P.: July 1915, Vol.9647, p.46.

they were non-resident zamindars, nor that they lacked interest in their zamindaris.

Such being the case, the nobleman's presence, despite his exclusive habits, was felt by a large section of the population, both the educated and the illiterate, due to his personal supervision, periodical appearances, and through the junior landlords whose spokesman he and his fellow nobles usually were. Moreover, his presence was kept alive by the delegated subordinates in his own service. The authority of the estate staff depended on their ability to convince the prajas that they acted with the consent of the patriarchical superior (karta/malik) who was the inhabitants' provider (annadata) destined by fate.

Doubtless the parasitical zamindar, so frequently brought to the literate public's notice by the vernacular novelists, existed in society. Referring to them the Maharaja of Burdwan wrote, "I believe the sole occupation of many is to gloat over the meals like hogs, and have servants to rub oil over them, and who pass their days mostly smoking the Hookah and cracking vulgar jokes".<sup>1</sup> Such zamindars were urged to make fruitful use of their time. By voicing their advice, the nobles not only influenced the lesser zamindars but also brought to the Government's and the general public's notice their own activities and achievements. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar

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1. B.C. Mahtab: Impressions, p.46.

urged at the Bengal Landholders Association that it was essential for the country that the zamindars should improve the quality of the land and labour applied to agriculture. They should consider their prime duty to make gifts of model agricultural farms to their own tenants and peasantry.<sup>1</sup> The best known model farm was the Palla Farm maintained by the Burdwan estate.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan, in a more forceful tone, proclaimed that if dreams were to be realised, work rather than discussions and resolutions was necessary.<sup>3</sup>

The nobles' functions were not restricted to giving a lead to the zamindari class only. If that had been so, success at the polls against the formidable nationalists would have been unlikely. After all, however powerful a malik had been, he must nevertheless see to it that his followers' willingness to render service was preserved. In other words he owed them humane treatment.<sup>4</sup> Such humane treatment necessarily had to extend over a larger area than merely the zamindari class for his traditional authority to remain unimpaired, since the landholders who paid revenue to the Government were comparatively small in number. But the zamindari machinery did not comprise only the landlords and the peasants with a handful of zamindari staff linking the two. There existed a long chain of tenure holders, between the landlord and the tiller, whose interests were so

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1. The Englishman, 5 Feb. 1913, p.6.

2. B.D.G.: Burdwan, p.98.

3. The Englishman;: 28 Dec. 1912, p.12.

4. R. Bendix: Max Weber, p.303.

inter-locked with the interest of the zamindar that their interest to render service was automatically preserved.

Between the actual cultivator and the State there were sometimes as many as twenty to thirty intermediate holders. Above the tiller there were two or more grades of under-rayats. Above them was the dejure rayat followed by layer after layer of tenure holders.<sup>1</sup> The entire hierarchy shared the profits of the land in a manner similar to shareholders in a company. It has been said that 70% to 80% of the income of the land was taken by the zamindar. But the entire amount did not go into the zamindar's coffers alone.<sup>2</sup> This is clear from records of the Land Revenue Commission 1938 which surveyed the situation in Bengal from the turn of the century onwards. The Manager of the Murshidabad Estate reported that only 6% of the gross produce went to the Nawab.<sup>3</sup> Doubtless the low figure was not the general rule. The more affluent estates gave a far larger share to the zamindar. Such was the case of the Maharaja of Burdwan, proprietor of the largest zamindari. His margin of profit fluctuated between 36% in the most fertile sectors to nil in areas with poor quality soil. On the average he received 16% of the profit.<sup>4</sup> Keeping these two extreme figures in mind, it is apparent that though

1. Zamindar- Patnidar- Darpatnidar- Sapatnis- Chahar-patnis- .... Jotedar- Chukanedar- .... Adhiar. The first was the owner of the land while the last was the real cultivator. - Administration Report British India 1911-12: Bengal, pp.77-82.
2. L.R.C.: Vol.III, pp.66,67.
3. Ibid, : Vol.V, p.86.
4. Ibid: Vol.III, p.486.

the zamindar received a substantial sum of money on paper, the entire income from the land did not come into his possession. A large percentage of it was distributed amongst the tenure holders well before his dues came into his hands.

Although the superior landholder has been accused of rack-renting his tenants at every available opportunity to increase his share it was not really in his interest to resort to such means. Such a policy was a short-sighted one which involved loss in the end, as it rendered collection difficult.<sup>1</sup> The only really effective way of gaining the tenants' cooperation to secure increases in rents or cesses was by giving them various collateral advantages. As the relationship was a personal one, rather than an impersonal relationship with an indifferent state official, it was possible to come to an understanding. That intimacy was based on age-old customs. It was not unusual for tenants to think it their sacred duty to offer the first fruit of the newly planted tree to the zamindar and, even until recent times, the custom of propitiating the zamindar's name along with the ancestors' during the sradh ceremony was commonly noticeable.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from sharing his income and traditional intimacy with the landlord, the tenant gained some other advantages from the zamindari system. As the landlords generally avoided recourse to the law courts for recovery of rent unless any due could be

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1. L.R.C. : Vol.III, p.61.

2. The Bengalee: 27 Sept. 1911, p.3.

barred by limitation, the tenants had an inbuilt period of respite, unlike the tenants of the Government. Moreover it was easier to obtain remission of rent or a reduction of interest rates during times of distress from an individual personally connected to them. The Burdwan estate remitted an average of Rs.90,000 annually between 1900 and 1938.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, whenever the agents of the zamindar were too oppressive, the tenants could appeal to the zamindar himself, who was much more amenable to threats and persuasion than a State or salaried official. Since the zamindar had to rely on the tenants for collecting sufficient money to pay land revenue, he could not become too unreasonable and over-bearing in his dealings with them, and the latter, if organised, invariably got the best terms from him.<sup>2</sup> This group of tenure holders formed the bulk of the rural bhadralok of Bengal.<sup>3</sup>

Like the tenants, the peasants were also interlocked with the zamindars in many respects. It is generally argued that the links were ineffective since the zamindar made a habit of extorting illegal cesses which turned the peasants away from him. At times these abwabs were larger even than the rent itself. As a justification for this, the zamindars informed the Land Revenue Commission that it was generally recognised that such abwabs were preferred by the rayats to

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1. L.R.C.: Vol.IV, pp.384,484.

2. Ibid.: Vol.III, p.68.

3. Ibid.: Vol.V, p.111.



the regular enhancement of rent, provided the cesses were not exorbitant.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to assess the validity of their argument since no record is available where the peasants' reply has been noted.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, what is possible to examine are the advantages they received, the types of lives they led, and their disregard for alternative occupations.

In order to extend cultivation and develop the countryside, the zamindars often allowed the rayats to hold land free of rent for a term of years, and they occasionally even paid for building huts for the cultivators. In some cases the homestead land of such a rayat was not assessed for rent even when his cultivated lands were fully developed and assessed. R.C. Dutt, in his open letter to Curzon, maintained that in consequence of the Permanent Settlement "the cultivators are more prosperous, more resourceful, better able to help themselves in years of bad harvest than cultivators in any other part of India."<sup>3</sup> The picture of relative comfort and security portrayed by J.C. Jack in his survey of a Bengal district corroborates this

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1. B.D.G.: Mymensingh, pp.108,109.

2. It is very difficult to accept their claim since records show that such cesses were undoubtedly exorbitant. According to the Floud Commission, abwabs varied from 30 to 120 per cent of the legal rent. Abwabs were demanded for such instances as marriage fees, fines for social offences, tolls and taxes for carrying on certain trades, for digging ponds and for construction of roads and canals. An ironic case was reported of a landlord levying a tax of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the rental in order to pay the cost of his own litigations. - L.R.C.: Vol.VI, p.34.

3. Ibid.: Vol.V, pp.49,54.

analysis.<sup>1</sup> Apparently it was also possible to come across many rayats who were prosperous enough to build houses with corrugated iron roofs and sal posts, and living in conditions of reasonable comfort. Rarely did one come across a village where the peasantry had not lived there for generations, some longer than their landlords. Moreover, it is significant that very small percentages of the labourers working in the mills of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, and in the tea gardens of North Bengal and Assam, consisted of rayats of Bengal. It was equally noticeable that rayats from other parts and provinces of India migrated in large numbers to distant places like Africa, New Zealand, Burma, Fiji Islands, British Guyana, whereas few of the Bengal rayats did so.<sup>2</sup> Presumably they preferred to stay and cultivate the lands of their zamindars.

Apart from their activities as the superior zamindars of the province, the nobles operated in other spheres as well: activities they had inherited as traditions from their predecessors. These also acted as channels of influence. One such sphere was the religious life of Bengal. They maintained vast debottor and waqf<sup>3</sup> properties. According to the leading Muslim journal, the Muhammadi, those waqf estates were "the backbone of the Mussalman community".<sup>4</sup> The income from such properties was expected to be used

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1. J.C. Jack: Economic Life of a Bengal District, pp.19,21-30.
  2. L.R.C.: Vol.III, pp.3,17,62.
  3. Ind.N.P.: week ending 17 Apr.1915, p.580.
  4. Ibid: week ending 19 Aug.1911, p. 1030.

for the upkeep of various temples and mosques. Thus they became the recognised sebayats and mutwallis of a large number of important religious centres in Bengal. The devout were constantly aware of the fact that the nobles were the benevolent keepers of their holy shrines. Prayers were regularly chanted and blessings invoked by the priests on behalf of the benefactors. Tablets recording the dedicator's name were placed at prominent places for the devotees to view.

During important ceremonies many noble families participated with the public and personally led the festivities. The Sovabazar family's annual Durga Puja had become a reputed institution of pride for the Hindus of Bengal, when the general public was lavishly entertained.<sup>1</sup> The lavishness of the celebration was closely rivalled by the Raja of Lalgola. During the festival the Raja distributed clothes for the poor and fed thousands of people.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Nadia used to celebrate the Baradol with tremendous pomp and show.<sup>3</sup> Escorted by household sepoy's armed with guns and bayonets, horses richly caparisoned, attendants carrying silver huddas, flag bearers, bands of music, trumpeters and drummers, the Nashipur family and the estate officials helped pull the holy chariot

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1. The Englishman: 12 Oct. 1912, p.3.

2. The Bengalee: 13 Oct. 1914, p.2.

3. Ibid: 11 Apr. 1914, p.1.

during the Rathjatra. During the Jhulanjatra, which was similarly sponsored by the Nashipur estate, the people from Murshidabad, Birbhum and other districts flocked to Nashipur.<sup>1</sup> The Hetampur family<sup>2</sup> and Raja Jyot Kumar Mukerjee<sup>3</sup> celebrated the Saraswati Puja on a large scale with spectators from the neighbourhood crowding the places. The latter also celebrated the Gajadharti Puja with great pomp and ceremony when the inhabitants of Uttarpura, Bally, Serampur and other adjacent villages were invited and entertained.<sup>4</sup> Regular kirtan processions were led out with a great deal of display on behalf of the Kassimbazar family. Moreover, the huge Shivaratri festival fair held at the Maharaja's Sidheswar temple in Begunia Mauza was a well known occasion, and drew Hindus from all the neighbouring villages.<sup>5</sup> From this we can see that such popular ritual observances maintained by the nobles provided credibility to their position not only as landlords but equally as guardians of religious institutions.

Such activities as these were not merely confined to Hindu families among the nobility. The Nawab of Dacca spent sixty-five thousand rupees annually on religious and charitable purposes.<sup>6</sup> Nawab Abdul Jabbar frequently led the Id prayer on the grand maidan.<sup>7</sup> The Murshidabad chelum-tabut procession of the wagf estate of Nawab

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1. D.C. Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, pp.140,141.

2. The Englishman: 13 Feb. 1911, p.6.

3. Ibid: 3 Feb. 1914, p.3.

4. Ibid: 20 Nov. 1918, p.8.

5. Kassimbazar to Sec.Gen.Dept.Beng. 16 Dec. 1913,  
B.G.P.: March 1914, Vol.9373, p.5.

6. E.B.D.G.: Dacca, p.182. 7. The Bengalee:21 Nov.1912,p.2.

Naseul Mamalik was renowned in the Muslim community.

A large number of the Nizam family would participate in the procession, together with thousands of people.<sup>1</sup>

To the naive understanding of the common man, such acts were not only overwhelming but also were visible proof that the local nobleman was one of them, although his extraordinary position far above their mundane existence called for their respect and loyalty. To an extent the nobles' activity in the religious life equated them with the Brahmins and clothed them with the same charisma as the latter.<sup>2</sup> In some cases it went even further than the Brahmins as, unlike them, the nobleman could ignore religious barriers, and also act as a benefactor of other religious communities beside his own. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar presided over the Bengal Buddhist Association,<sup>3</sup> and the Raja of Santosh over the Young Men's Christian Association.<sup>4</sup> The Hindu Burdwan family managed a Muslim shrine<sup>5</sup> and the Muslim Nawab of Dacca upheld the Hindu students' privilege to perform Saraswati Puja in schools and colleges.<sup>6</sup> The Nawab's religious tolerance gained him the respect of all his prajas so clearly manifested by the deep mourning both communities went into at his death.<sup>7</sup>

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1. The Bengalee: 1 Jan. 1916, p.2.
  2. According to Weber, the Brahmins and the Chinese literati were thought to possess magical charisma by virtue of their familiarity with the sacred books.  
- R. Bendix: Max Weber, p.117.
  3. The Bengalee: 4 Jan. 1913, p.2.
  4. Ibid: 15 Aug. 1913, p.2.
  5. Khakar Baba pirsthan located in rajbari,  
now Burdwan University.
  6. Nat.N.P.: week ending 21 Feb. 1914, p.158.
  7. Ind. owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 30 Jan.1915, p.71.

Religious life was closely interwoven with the caste system. Most Hindus belonged to, or claimed to belong to one of the jat or jati that comprised the Hindu caste system. The tribals either followed the same pattern or had tribal affiliations which had become as structured as that of the jats and the jatis. Moreover, a large number of immigrants from other parts of India who had been settled in Bengal for generations maintained their traditional affiliations and formed individual subcultures of their own. The census reports denominated all three different categories as one, presumably because, for all practical purposes, all three could be regarded as caste groups, although the two latter were not so technically.

An analysis of the caste groups as distinguished by the census reports shows that the nobles dominated a large number of them as patrons, presiding officers and spokesmen: in short, the caste dalpatis. The Maharaja of Dinajpur presided over the Uttar Rarhi Kayasthas, while the Kakina family were the leaders of the Barendra Kayasthas. The Sovabazar and Santosh families and Raja Upendranarayan Mitra Roy also played prominent roles in the Permanent Standing Committee of the Kayasthas.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan was the president

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1. The Bengalee: 1 Jan. 1913, p.3.

of the Kshatriyas and took a keen interest in their welfare.<sup>1</sup> The office bearers of the Tili Jati Sanmilani were the Maharaja of Kassimbazar as president, with the Rajas of Dighapatia and Bhagyakul as vice-presidents.<sup>2</sup> Raja Reshee Case Law chaired the Subarna Banik Samaj.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Nashipur was a leading member of the Agarwalla group.<sup>4</sup> The Rajas of Tahirpur and Susang presided over the Bangal Brahmin Mahasava<sup>5</sup>, while Raja Kishori Lal Goswami was an important figure of the Barendra Brahmins.<sup>6</sup> The Raja of Balasore was a prominent personality of the Vaishnab sect.<sup>7</sup> Though the Maharaja of Kassimbazar was a Tili he convened a Conference of the Vaishnabs with the intent of making it an annual occasion, and establishing a permanent body to spread the Vaishnab doctrine. As a gesture of sincerity, "the resources of the Maharaja Bahadur [were] consecrated at the altar of the noble ideal".<sup>8</sup> The Raja of Chakdighi was a prominent Rajput chattri.<sup>9</sup> The Maharajas of Cooch Behar and Tripura and the Chakma Raja were eminent members of the Koch, Tipera and the Chakma tribals. Moreover, the Rajas of Tripura, Cooch Behar, Burdwan and Narail had territorial influence over the Goalas,

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1. The Englishman: 28 Dec. 1912, p.12.

2. Ibid: 29 Dec. 1913, p.5.

3. Ibid: 10 June 1912, p.5.

4. Ibid: 11 June 1913, p.3.

5. Ibid: 13 March, 1914, p.6.

6. The Bengalee: 25 Feb. 1911, p.7.

7. The Englishman: 21 Feb. 1911, p.6.

8. The Bengalee: 17 March 1911, p.6.

9. S & B.P. Singh Roy: Chakdighi Singh-Roy Family, p.3.

Bagdis and Namasudras.<sup>1</sup> According to the census report of 1921, that would mean influence in some form or the other over approximately 40% of the Hindu population of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> If the Cooch Behar family's influence over the Brahmo Samaj and the Raja of Azimganj's, as President of the Digambar Jain Shetambar Association,<sup>3</sup> over the Jains are taken into account, the figure would be even larger.

The caste committees were powerful and influential bodies in the social life of the province. The caste kutcheris of the eighteenth century were replaced by intercaste dals or de facto social factions by the nineteenth century. This was possible because the caste structure was less rigid than in other parts of India. The Brahmins had to share the economic and social power with other castes. The Kyasthas and the Baidyas enjoyed a very high social and political status along with the Brahmins, although their ritual status was rather low. Even the Subarnabaniks (unclean Sudras) could and did acquire a high social standing. Brahmins were often employed in the most servile office and the Sudras elevated to situations of respectability and importance. Although lack of rigidity made it possible for intercaste dals to be formed, caste remained important in the social life of the people in relation to marriage, inheritance, adoption and funeral rites.

The dalpatis, or the office bearers of the dals, controlled the members of their respective castes by

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1. Ind.N.P.: week ending 19 Aug. 1916, p.1140.
  2. Census 1921: Bengal, Vol.V, pt.2, pp.166-179.
  3. Cumming to Religious Associations, 27 March 1911, B.J.P.: Sept. 1911, Vol.8676, p.11.



using the instruments of social sanctions and of excommunication through the caste dals. Once excommunication was invoked, the person involved would find it difficult to marry his children off or obtain a priest to perform the family rites; he might not have been invited to traditional social functions such as sradhs, pujas and marriages, and his invitations might not have been accepted.<sup>1</sup>

Though the nerve centres of such dals were usually at the provincial capital, their influence was pervasive since the urban society was greatly an extension of the rural community, and because the dalpatis comprised so many nobles and zamindars whose zamindaris were located throughout the province. The main object of these organisations was to improve the social positions of their different castes as a group. They held periodical meetings to discuss questions of social importance that arose. When an aggrieved party appealed to them as dalpatis, they would call a meeting of the more influential caste members where the question at issue would be discussed, votes taken and the verdict passed.<sup>2</sup> Their respective castes' standing committees would meet to frame constitutions, co-ordinate all the movements of the subsidiary bodies and receive donations into the central fund for the use of their more unfortunate caste members.<sup>3</sup> It

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1. S.N. Mukherjee: 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, Elites in South Asia: ed. Leach and Mukherjee, pp.55-57, 59, 71, 72.

2. P. Sinha: Nineteenth Century Bengal, p.90.

3. The Bengalee: 1 Jan. 1913, p.3. (Kayastha)

was also in their province to keep a vigil over the overall economic conditions of their caste groups and formulate policies to increase their communal wealth. Moreover they published journals and periodicals for the information of their own caste.<sup>1</sup> General subjects such as education, the abuse of the custom of dowry payments,<sup>2</sup> and the wasteful display of wealth were also handled by them.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, major social issues, such as the grounds for ostracising a member, were also in their sphere of control.<sup>4</sup>

An examination of the proceedings during the period under review, reveals an attitude pattern of the nobles in their capacity as leading figures of their respective castes. Apparently they were convinced that the caste system was being gradually eroded by the over-westernised political leaders of the time. Their efforts were directed towards stemming the process. During the ninth All India Kshatriya Conference, the Maharaja of Burdwan emphasised that the degeneration of social customs was a product of "over westernization" or "denationalization" of Bengal's modern leaders. He advised the gathering not to lean so far towards western concepts since it would not suit Indian conditions. On the contrary, it would lead to "racial suicide". The advocates of such ideas were downright "mischievous" according to him.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The Englishman: 29 Dec. 1913, p.5. (Tili)
  2. Ibid: 10 June 1912, p.5. (Subarna Banik)
  3. Ibid: 28 Dec. 1912, p.12. (Kshatriya)
  4. Ibid: 13 March 1914, p.6. (Brahmin)
  5. Ibid: 28 Dec. 1912, p.12.

The Raja of Tahirpur, at the inaugural meeting of the Bengal Brahmin Mahasava, asked the gathering to set aside western approaches to such meetings and follow Indian traditions instead. To underline his appeal he moved and carried the proposal that, instead of electing the chairman in the western fashion, the senior-most member should be installed with Indian customs. Moreover, he refused to welcome the people from out of town as delegates since, according to the Indian concept, members of the same caste were not considered visitors but rather "kith and kin" who belonged together. In the same meeting the Raja of Susang proclaimed that excessive "occidental influence" was at the root of the downfall of Hinduism.<sup>1</sup> At the All India Kayastha Conference held at the Sovabazar Rajbari, the Rajas of Dinajpur, Kakina, Santosh, Sovabazar and Raja Upendranarayan Mitra Roy supported the resolution that the Kayasthas cooperate with the Brahmins and other castes "as it was a wise division of labour".<sup>2</sup>

To prevent the total destruction of the caste system which, according to them, was one of the pillars on which Indian society rested, they made serious efforts to introduce reforms within their respective caste systems. To revitalise the dying embers of the system was their aim. The Maharaja of Burdwan vehemently criticised some of the leading Kshatriyas for not translating into action the resolutions that were passed in these conferences. He

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1. Ibid: 13 March 1914, p.6.

2. The Bengalee: 1 Jan. 1913, p.3.

said that when the dalpatis resolved on some policy, not only should they adhere to it but also make sure that it ~~was~~ observed by all their caste members. Only then could they hope to regain their previous prestige. Moreover, the group should be strengthened by doing away with all artificial sub-divisions within the caste itself.<sup>1</sup> The Kayasthas, in the same strain, resolved that all artificial restrictions between sub-castes be removed.<sup>2</sup> The Raja of Tahirpur emphasised that Brahmanism was on its way out and required to be resuscitated quickly. To avoid further loss of followers Raja Kishori Lal Goswami began the movement to readmit the members who had been outcasted by the Brahmins for having travelled abroad.<sup>3</sup> Raja Reshee Case Law encouraged the Subarna Baniks to do away with sub-divisions, maintaining it was "distinction without any differences".<sup>4</sup>

Thus we find that the nobles made serious efforts to resuscitate the caste groups rather than allowing them to perish under the influence of westernised Indians. According to them, it was a basic pillar of society which the "denationalised" leaders could not appreciate. The nobles' task was made easy by prevailing conditions. Caste, to an Indian was, and in many respects still is today, an instinctive habit. He accepted it without much question. Goldthorpe felt this was so because caste observances in India were not forced by a powerful and privileged group upon resentful lower orders.

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1. The Englishman: 28 Dec. 1912, p.12.

2. The Bengalee: 1 Jan. 1913, p.3.

3. The Englishman: 13 March 1914, p.6.

4. Ibid: 10 June 1912, p.5.

On the contrary, they were accepted and upheld by most Hindus.<sup>1</sup> After all, one of the poorest and consequently under privileged man in Bengal could be a Brahmin, and the richest and most influential a Tili, with the former working as a servant of the latter. Such being the case it was more difficult to destroy than preserve the system. Moreover, the nobles were ideally positioned to make their influence felt. Their capacity to influence often embraced more than one caste group. For example, the Tripura and Cooch Behar families were not only important Kshatriyas but were leading figures of the Tipera and Koch tribals as well. In this way, their influence as caste dalpatis was widespread since many of them had tribal affiliations and all of them had territorial influence.

The nobles' interest in religious life and in caste groups led a number of them to take an active part in questions of social reforms effecting the society as a whole. During a function held to demonstrate the "feeling of joy" by the Sanskrit pandits of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa at a new decoration bestowed on the Maharaja of Burdwan, he pointed out that he had had discussions with the Maharajas of Natore and Nadia about social conditions, and had concluded that next winter they would invite the opinions of the pandits on certain vital points (left unexplained), and then

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1. J.E. Goldthorpe: Introduction to Sociology, p.126.

hold a large meeting. They requested the pandits not entirely to obstruct the present stream of social change but to utilise the opportunity to canalize it into a flow which would accrue to the entire society.<sup>1</sup> The Raja of Narajole presided over the Projapati Samiti: a society to propogate the abolition or reduction of marriage dowries, curtailment of expenses and other allied matters.<sup>2</sup> The patrons of the Samiti were the Rajas of Susang, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Hetampur and Tajhat and the Rajas Peary Mohan Mukerjee<sup>3</sup> and Kishori Lal Goswami.<sup>4</sup> The Maharaja of Nadia also took a prominent part in the anti-dowry movement,<sup>5</sup> while the Maharaja of Burdwan was a patron of the Hindu Marriage Reform League.<sup>6</sup> Their attitude was that of reformers of Indian institutions, rather than rejecters of them as antiquated structures. They strongly believed that the indigenous institutions served definite purposes.

It was not only on festive occasions associated with religion and caste that the nobles came into contact with the people as benefactors. They would also step out of their exclusive surroundings in times of difficulties to help the distressed prajas. During the much dreaded floods one could often find them taking charge of the relief work. The Raja of Chakdighi once managed to evacuate twenty five villages in a few hours during the middle of the night, thus preventing the loss of any life

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1. The Englishman: 8 Apr. 1912, p.6.

2. Ibid: 3 Jan. 1913, p.3.

3. The Bengalee: 14 May, 1913, p.2.

4. The Englishman: 22 Jan. 1913, p.3.

5. Ind. owned Eng.P.P.: week ending 4 Apr. 1914, p.232.

6. The Bengalee: 20 Dec. 1913, p.2.

on his estates.<sup>1</sup> Without his assistance, the unsuspecting villagers could easily have been overtaken by the terrible calamity. At such times he gave shelter to thousands in his thakurbaris.<sup>2</sup> At Burdwan the Maharaja and Raja Ban Bihari Kapur usually took control during such critical periods with their elephants being rushed about to help in the evacuation of drowning people and property, in blocking any breaches in the embankment of the rivers.<sup>3</sup> Often many would be fed from the rajbari stores.<sup>4</sup> Carmichael said that Raja Ban Bihari "was of the greatest service at Burdwan during the floods. He was personally most active, his advice to the Collector was invaluable, and he dispensed the Maharaja's charity with an experienced and discriminating hand. He was the one man there who knew exactly what had to be done from the time of the first alarm, and he did it."<sup>5</sup> When heavy rain caused floods at Brahmanberia, the Maharaja of Tripura personally arrived to supervise the relief work, allowing the raj schools and hospitals to be used for housing the affected people and opening the gates of the huge Uzzayantaprasad where the zanana ladies were cared for as the Maharani opened the andar-mahal for their use. The raj officials in the zamindari kutcheries were instructed to supply rice and chira to the flood victims and all the raj boats were dispatched for

1. S & B.P. Singh Roy: Chakdighi Singh-Roy Family, p.14.

2. The Englishman: 13 Aug. 1913, p.6., Thakurbaris = Temples.

3. Nat.N.P.: week ending 23 Aug. 1913, p.869.

4. The Englishman: 13 Aug. 1913, p.6.

5. Carmichael to Hardinge 13 Sept. 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol. Valo, pt.I, p.251.

rescue operations.<sup>1</sup> In his arrangement to give relief to his flood distressed prajas, the Raja of Kakina surpassed all. He gave away fifty thousand rupees in cash, and paddy worth another twenty thousand. Moreover, he sanctioned fifty thousand more for constructing embankments along local rivers. Altogether he spent one lakh twenty thousand rupees, or nearly half of his annual income, on a single occasion.<sup>2</sup>

Even during an unexpected crisis like the collapse of a bridge with a train full of passengers at Hetampur, the first person on the scene was the Raj Kumar of the place.<sup>3</sup> When large-scale distress was caused by lack of rain leading to wells and tanks drying up, the Hetampur family distributed rice and paddy to the affected population with people from the neighbouring areas also finding help at the rajbari.<sup>4</sup> After a number of houses collapsed at Burdwan in a terrible storm which caused widespread havoc, many were faced with terrible hardship. The son of Nawab Abdul Jabbar came to their rescue by taking into his houses over three hundred storm victims and supplying many others with food and money. He later moved about from village to village, alleviating distress of the people.<sup>5</sup> When there was a scarcity of food grains causing the poor to feel the financial pressure because of rice selling at an inflated price of six to seven

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1. The Bengalee: 6 June 1915, p.2.

2. The Englishman: 23 Sept. 1913, p.4.

3. Nat.N.P.: week ending 19 July 1913, p.683.

4. The Bengalee: 21 May 1916, p.3.

5. The Englishman: 29 Sept. 1916, p.2.



seers per rupee, the Raja of Azimganj imported vast quantities and sold it to the people at ten seers per rupee for the entire period of scarcity.<sup>1</sup> The Raja of Chanchal's splendid work during a cholera epidemic resulted in the saving of over a thousand of his tenants' lives and drew profound admiration from the Bengal Government.<sup>2</sup> Such acts were not easily forgotten by the people who had received these timely helps, so appreciable during periods of great strain.

While the illiterate appreciated the immediate benefits rendered by the nobles, the educated residents could see a step further, being aware of the fact that the Government exacted a substantial pulbandi tax from the landlords for the maintenance of the embankments. For example, the Burdwan estate alone paid the large sum of sixty thousand rupees per annum.<sup>3</sup> The Engineer's report on the 1913 floods suggested that, out of 1,600 bighas of cultivated land situated within the town of Burdwan, the crops of 1,200 had been destroyed. Fifty cattle, ten horses and various other animals had also perished, while the total loss suffered by the merchants and aratdars approached two lakhs of rupees.<sup>4</sup> The above report was supplemented by the statement issued by the Estate Administration which revealed that 90% to 100% of the inhabitants of many villages of the flooded area had been made

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1. Bengal Zamindars, p.102.
  2. Gourlay to DuBouley 15 March 1916, C.P.I.: 1916, Vol. Val5, pt.1, p. 180.
  3. Nat.N.P.: week ending 19 July 1913 p.683.
  4. Ind. owned Eng.N.P. : week ending 10 Jan. 1914, p.35.

homeless. The Maharaja brought the fact to the notice of the officials and the public in a meeting at the Town Hall.<sup>1</sup> Reacting to the two statements, the leading newspaper, Bangavasi, suggested that the Maharaja should sue the Government for neglect.<sup>2</sup> The local residents were aware of the fact that as early as 1911 the Chakdighi family had taken the trouble to escort Sir Andrew Fraser to view the precarious conditions of the Damodar embankment,<sup>3</sup> although nothing positive came of it. For a similar reason after six continuous floods of the Kunti River at Hughli district, the Maharaja of Dighapatia drew up a cost of repair personally, and persuaded his fellow zamindars to contribute towards the strengthening of the embankments.<sup>4</sup> The sympathetic approach to the difficulties of the prajas resulting from natural calamities - difficulties which in many ways were inter-linked with the zamindars' own - identified the local nobleman with the local people, and formed an invisible bridge over the gap separating the nobles from the general public.

The help extended to the prajas went further than mere aid during times of crisis. A number of nobles attempted to publicise the agricultural produce of the locality by organising periodical exhibitions on their estates as an incentive towards better productivity. Such exhibitions were looked upon with favour by the Government, since it helped the spread of knowledge about

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1. 'Town Hall Meeting - Floods',  
B.R.P.: Jan. 1914, Vol. 9386, p.83
  2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 6 Sept. 1913, pp.920,925
  3. Ibid: week ending 7 Oct. 1911, p.1252
  4. The Englishman: 19 Apr. 1916 p.6

agricultural improvements among the actual cultivators.

Amongst others, the Chakdighi and the Balasore families were commended by the Government for their efforts in this line.<sup>1</sup> The most well known was the annual agricultural and industrial exhibition, cattle show and mela held at Hetampur during the Saraswati Puja, under the patronage of that family.<sup>2</sup> The Bankithia exhibition was jointly sponsored by the Maharaja of Kassimbazar and Nawab Shamsul Huda at Berhampur.<sup>3</sup> The former also inaugurated the Khulna and Kurigram Agricultural and Industrial Exhibitions.<sup>4</sup> The Nawab of Dacca arranged a most interesting exhibition of the works of the Dacca artisans in his Shahbag Gardens.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from exhibitions, they also exerted themselves in other directions. The Maharajas of Darbhanga (Bihar) and Kassimbazar floated the cooperative society called Dharma Samayaya Ltd., with a registered capital of thirty crores of rupees and invited the "ruling chiefs and noblemen of the country" to put themselves at the head of the concern.<sup>6</sup> The financiers and trustees also included the Gouripur (Mymensingh) family.<sup>7</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar even established a cooperative department in his estate. It was to help create associations among weavers, rearers and realers of silk-farms, and other such workers on cooperative principles.<sup>8</sup>

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1. 'Agri.Dept.Rep. for Year ending 30 June 1911', B.R.P. :1911, Vol. 8692, pp.27,28.

2. The Englishman: 13 Feb. 1911, p.6.

3. Ibid: 2 Feb. 1915, p.5.

4. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 8 Feb. 1913, p.105.

5. The Englishman: 24 Aug. 1916, p.5.

6. Ibid: 7 Aug. 1911, p.6.

7. The Bengalee: 26 July 1912, p.10.

8. Ibid: 11 Aug. 1911, p.2.

The Raja of Narajole donated Rs.1,000 to the Midnapore Cooperative Society for the promotion of its objects, and later increased the sum to Rs.5,000.<sup>1</sup> The Raj Kumar of Kakina did much to encourage the development of the Kakina Cooperative (town and rural) Bank.<sup>2</sup> In 1917 fourteen noblemen<sup>3</sup>, along with some other affluent Bengalis inaugurated the Bengal Home Industries Association under the patronage and persuasion of Lady Carmichael. The Maharaja of Burdwan, moving the resolution in the inaugural meeting, said: "this meeting deplores the present depressed condition of the Home Industries, arts and crafts of Bengal, and welcomes the proposal to establish an Association for their promotions and development."<sup>4</sup> Out of the first week's collection, the fourteen nobles contributed two thirds of the total amount.<sup>5</sup>

The contribution of the nobles was equally noticeable in the civic development of the mufassil areas. During the period under review many such projects were undertaken. Moreover, the inhabitants were still enjoying the benefits of the projects completed before the period.

The Maharaja of Dinajpur spent money to complete the Ghagra and Thompson canals, and to improve sanitation

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1. The Bengalee: 4 Feb. 1911, p.6.

2. Ibid: 19 May, 1911, p.7.

3. Tagore, Mymensingh, Burdwan, Kassimbazar, Chanchal, Tajhat, Dinajpur, Nashipur, Hetampur, Santosh, 2 Laws, 2 Uttarparas.

4. The Englishman: 2 Feb. 1917, p.7.

5. Ibid: 6 Feb. 1917, p.6.

in Dinajpur town. The Raja of Bhagyakul constructed the waterworks at Chittagong.<sup>1</sup> Raja Reshee Case Law spent Rs.80,000 for the construction of waterworks at Chinsura.<sup>2</sup> The Raja of Narajole wrote to the local magistrate expressing his willingness to contribute one lakh of rupees towards the Midnapore waterworks fund.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan contributed Rs.50,000 for the construction of waterworks at Burdwan.<sup>4</sup> The Raj Rajeswari waterworks at Mymensingh was provided by the Maharaja of Muktagacha.<sup>5</sup> It was also announced that Raja Jyot Kumar Mukerjee subscribed Rs.25,000 towards the construction of waterworks at Serampur,<sup>6</sup> a figure which was later raised by adding another Rs.10,000.<sup>7</sup> The Nawab of Dacca gave as much as four and a half lakhs of rupees to provide the town with electric light, and another two and a half lakhs for waterworks.<sup>8</sup> The Raja of Kakina promised Rs.50,000 as a donation for the improvement of the town.<sup>9</sup> The Raja of Lalgola made munificent grants for the improvement of water supply and sanitation in the Murshidabad district.<sup>10</sup> Carmichael admired him very much for his civic consciousness.<sup>11</sup> The drainage of Murshidabad received substantial help from

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1. Whos Who, pt.V, p.4.
  2. Bengal Zamindars, p.71.
  3. Nat.N.P.: week ending 18 Oct. 1913, p.1099.
  4. Tours: 7-13 Dec. 1912, p.47.
  5. Ibid: 22-25 Dec. 1912, p.13.
  6. The Englishman: 28 Feb. 1911, p.9.
  7. Ibid: 4 Apr. 1911, p.6.
  8. E.B.D.G.: Dacca, p.182.
  9. The Englishman: 10 Feb. 1912, p.3.
  10. Nat.N.P.: week ending 24 June 1911, p.754.
  11. Carmichael to Hardinge 17 March 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol.Va 9, pt.I, p.145.

the Maharaja of Kassimbazar.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from providing help for general civic development,<sup>2</sup> the nobles founded and maintained or financially assisted a number of welfare institutions. The best known organisations belonged to Raja Reshee Case Law and the Raja of Sovabazar. The former was the Honorary Secretary and Manager of the Maharaj Mata Shibo Soondary Debi Hindu Widows Fund and the Brahmajogi Hindu Orphans Fund, founded by his family.<sup>3</sup> The latter founded the Sovabazar Benevolent Society to give relief to poor students, widows, orphans<sup>4</sup> and disabled invalids.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he had created the Kayastha Students Fund. Similarly, Raja Kristo Das Law presided over the Subarna Banik Charitable Institution and the Subarna Banik Samity.<sup>6</sup> All such acts benefited the individuals who required help, and increased the nobles' image as annadatas of the society.

Over and above the general civil welfare, the nobles concentrated a good deal of funds and energy on the medical needs of the people. The Burdwan family maintained and managed the Raj Hospitals at Burdwan and Kalna. The Maharaja also contributed Rs.80,000 and the construction site to build the Fraser Hospital at Burdwan, which was to provide the most modern facilities available to medical science.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Tours: 7-13 Dec. 1912, p.17.

2. This is a perfect example of how their efforts to better their own estates benefited the smaller surrounding zamindars.

3. Bengal Zamindars, p.71.

4. Whos Who, pt.VIII, p.39.

5. The Bangalee: 22 Jan. 1911, p.7.

6. Whos Who, pt.VIII, pp.47-48.

7. B.D.G.: Burdwan, p.85.

Two years later another Rs.10,000 was contributed for the construction of a separate female ward.<sup>1</sup> He also offered a lakh of rupees for building a sanitarium at a health centre, so that the people of Bengal could recuperate from illnesses in pleasanter surroundings.<sup>2</sup> The Nawab of Bogra founded the Tahurnissia Female Hospital on his estate.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Chanchal spent Rs.75,000 on the construction of a building at the local hospital and its equipment.<sup>4</sup> The Dighapatia estate maintained the hospital and dispensary at Rampur Boaliya and a charitable dispensary at Nakhila. According to the Calcutta Review, they proved to be inestimable boons to the sick poor of that part of the country.<sup>5</sup> The Joy Kissen Hospital at Uttarpura was maintained by the Mukerjee family.<sup>6</sup> The Maharaja of Tripura established the much needed dispensary at Noakhali.<sup>7</sup> The Raja of Lalgola donated a lakh of rupees for the building of the Raja Rao Jogendra Narayan Female Hospital at Murshidabad.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he made it possible to open the eye ward at the local hospital at Berhampore. He had already donated a large sum for

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1. The Englishman: 13 Dec. 1912, p.6.
  2. 'Amended Draft Financial Statement 1914-15', B.F.P.: March 1914, Vol.9369, p.354.
  3. Whos Who, pt.V, p.27.
  4. The Englishman: 15 Apr. 1914, p.6.
  5. 'Rajas of Rajshahi', C.R.no.CXI: 1873, p.40.
  6. The Bengalee: 21 Feb. 1911, p.8.
  7. Tours: 31 July-9 Aug. 1912, p.65.
  8. The Bengalee: 19 Jan. 1911, p.5.

the hospital before he gave the Rs.84,000 to the Dispensary Committee.<sup>1</sup> The Raja of Bhagyakul also established an eye infirmary at Dacca.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Nashipur built the Nashipur Raj Dispensary where medical aid was given free to all during the morning and evening hours.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Sovabazar maintained many charitable dispensaries on his zamindari.<sup>4</sup> The Raja of Hetampur surpassed all by establishing a number of free dispensaries dealing not only with the allopathic system of medicine but with the homeopathic and ayurvedic also.<sup>5</sup> The Raja of Santosh, apart from inaugurating charitable dispensaries at Tangail, built a veterinary hospital at Mymensingh for the benefit of his tenants.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from financing and maintaining medical institutions within their zamindaris, they also took some interest in the larger question of public health at the provincial level. The Raja of Bhagyakul was the Life Governor of the Dacca Mitford Hospital, and the Raja of Sovabazar was the Governor of the Mayo . . . Hospital at Calcutta.<sup>7</sup> The latter was also a trustee and donor of the Albert Victor Hospital.<sup>8</sup> Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yusuf Husain was a member of

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1. The Englishman: 2 Aug. 1911, p.5.
  2. Whos Who, pt.V, p.6.
  3. D.C. Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, p.117.
  4. Whos Who, pt.VIII, p.39.
  5. Chiefs, Nobles & Zamindars, p.499.
  6. Whos Who, pt.V, p.7.
  7. Ibid, pt.V, p.6; pt.VIII, p.39.
  8. The Englishman: 5 Dec. 1912, p.6.



the managing committee of the Dacca Mitford Hospital and Secretary of the managing committee of the Lady Dufferin Hospital. He was a life member of the St. John Ambulance Executive Committee as well.<sup>1</sup> The Raja of Chanchal contributed large sums of money to the Bengal Ambulance Corps.<sup>2</sup> The Rajas of Kakina<sup>3</sup> and Kassimbazar<sup>4</sup> made generous donations to the Red Crescent Society, the Muslim equivalent to the Red Cross.

A large number of people were also influenced directly by the nobles. They were the ones who served on the zamindari staff as personal attendants, kutcheri officials and menials, military personnel, and so on and so forth. They were not only dependents of the nobles so far as their salaries were concerned, but the chakran lands set apart for their maintenance<sup>5</sup> usually continued to provide for them in their old age and for their dependents thereafter. It was common for all the household servants to get such land in lieu of service.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it was not uncommon for their children to be taken into the service of the family when they attained maturity. The number of people thus subject to influence had increased as some of the nobles began to divert their estates' finances from pure agriculture to trade and commerce. Workers and officers were required to run the enterprises and, like the zamindari staff, came

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1. Whos Who, pt.V, p.27.

2. Gourlay to DuBoulay 15 March 1916, C.P.I.: 1916, Vol.Val5, pt.1, p.180.

3. The Englishman: 7 Nov. 1912, p.5. 4. Ibid:20 Dec.1912,p.3.

5. McAlpin to Sec.Rev.Dept.Beng. 30 July 1915, B.R.P.: Sept. 1915, Vol.9656, p.43, (Mahisadal).

6. B.C. Sinha: Changing Times, p.12.

into the direct or indirect sphere of influence of the relevant nobleman depending on whether the enterprise was directly managed or leased to a second party.

The Law family was considered the foremost members in the Indian commercial community in Bengal. Their Prawn Law & Co. had very wide interests with branch offices even at London and Manchester.<sup>1</sup> It was closely followed in the business world by the Bhagyakul and Azimgunj families.<sup>2</sup> The Raja of Azimgunj's firm, Mool Chand Hurrack Chand,<sup>3</sup> was a thriving concern. The Maharaja of Muktagacha was one of the founder-promoters of the Cooperative Navigation Ltd.<sup>4</sup> The patrons of the India Equitable Insurance Co. Ltd. were the Maharajas of Cooch Behar and Kassimbazar, the Rajas Peary Mohan Mukerjee and Kishori Lal Goswami with the Raja of Sovabazar as Vice President.<sup>5</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar had pottery works,<sup>6</sup> silk factories<sup>7</sup> and a construction company.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he owned stone quarries at Barua, Gopalpur and Birbhum, managed by his company called Rajgaon Stone Co.<sup>9</sup> The Sumbhoo Oil Mill was also purchased by him and renamed Manindra Oil Mill.<sup>10</sup> He was also the owner of a number of collieries, Kassimbazar Raj Ward Estate had about 37 collieries by 1938.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Chiefs, Rajas & Zamindars, p.25.

2. Gourlay to Maffey 17 March 1917, L & T (India), Vol. 18, pt.I, p.190.

3. Mackey to Sec.Rev.Dept.Beng. 20 Jan. 1914, B.P.P.: Feb. 1914, Vol. 9388, p.16.

4. The Bengalee: 27 Apr. 1911, p.7.

5. Ibid: 14 May 1912, p.9.

6. Ind.N.P.: week ending 27 Nov. 1915, p.1712.

7. Ibid: week ending 4 Sept. 1915, p.561.

8. The Englishman: 6 Jan. 1917, p.6.

9. Ibid: 5 March 1919, p.10.

10. 'Ann.Rep.Pres.Div', B.G.P.: Oct.1911, Vol.8677, p.60.

11. L.R.C.: Vol.V, p 171.

Like Kassimbazar Estate, the Tagore<sup>1</sup> and Burdwan estates owned a number of collieries. Their divergence of zamindari funds from pure agriculture to commercial enterprises not only further increased their patronage over the people but also made it possible to dominate the Indian commercial community to a great extent. By the second decade of the century amongst the most influential members of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce were the Law, Kassimbazar, and Burdwan families, along with Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee.<sup>2</sup>

Education also received their attention as much as any other social sphere. In this field the nobles were at an apparent disadvantage. A number of them had not been to school, others had not been to college, while a handful of them did not even speak the English language properly. The difficulty was by-passed by patronage of educational institutions in the mufassil areas and, to a lesser extent, in the cities. They maintained innumerable schools and colleges from their estate funds. Financial control was at times supplemented by physical participation as presidents of college councils<sup>3</sup> or chairmen of advisory boards.<sup>4</sup>

Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee claimed that his father once founded thirty-one schools scattered over his estates in a single day.<sup>5</sup> The Raja's

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1 B.D.G.: Burdwan, p.130.

2. Addresses Presented at Cal.: Montagu, Vol.34, List of Deputation, Biographical details of members, and list of office bearers.

3. The Englishman.: 2 May, 1911, p.8. (Burdwan)

4. Ibid.: 11 Dec, 1917, p.9. (Kassimbazar)

5. Ibid.: 29 July, 1913, p.6.

eminence in the educational field was such that he presided over the independent body that conferred Sanskrit diplomas to the pandits.<sup>1</sup> A free High English school was established at Chakdighi.<sup>2</sup> The proprietor of the Rajah Suryya Kumar Institute at Rajbari was the Muktagacha family.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Santosh founded a girls' school at Dacca. The Raja of Sovabazar maintained many schools and madrassas in his zamindari. Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yusuf Hosain was a member of the managing committee of Dacca Ashanullah School of Engineering, Dacca Jaganath College and Dacca Madrassa. The Raja of Naldunga founded and maintained a higher class English school. The Nawab of Murshidabad established a high school at Murshidabad. The Maharaja of Dinajpore was the founder of the Diamond Jubilee School, a weaving school and a Sanskrit school.<sup>4</sup> The two storied Lyon Hindu Hostel capable of accommodating fifty boarders, which was attached to the Dinajpore zilla school was also built under the supervision of and with a large contribution from the Maharaja.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he promised to supply omnibuses for conveying pupils of the Pramathanath Girls' School founded by his predecessor.<sup>6</sup> The Raja of Kakina gave Rs.20,000 to

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1. Ind.N.P.: week ending 11 March, 1916, p.369.

2. B.D.G.: Burdwan, p.176.

3. The Englishman.: 27 Aug. 1912, p.3.

4. Whos Who, pt.V, pp. 4,7,27; pt.VIII, pp. 4,5,39,41,42

5. The Englishman: 19 Feb. 1917, p.17.

6. Nat.N.P.: week ending 15 Aug. 1914, p.834.

build the High English School at this estate headquarter.<sup>1</sup>

The Raja of Azimgunj constructed the Jiagunj Edward Institution at a cost of Rs.24,000, and contributed Rs.4,000 to the Krishnagar College.<sup>2</sup> Nawab Mohammad Ali Chaudhury kept an excellent girls' school where the needle-work, according to Lady Carmichael, was as good as could be seen anywhere.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Lalgola contributed Rs.7,000 for the construction of a boarding house attached to a school at Jungipore; likewise Rani Arnakali Devi of Kassimbazar spent over a lakh of rupees for the establishment of the Berhampore Jubilee Tol.<sup>4</sup> The Natore Maharaja's High School was opened in 1911.<sup>5</sup> The High School at Nayabasan was maintained solely by the Mayurbunj (Orissa) state.<sup>6</sup>

The Raja of Hetampur started a high school at Hetampur, and at Mathrun the Maharaja of Kassimbazar founded a school with a hostel attached at a cost of half a lakh of rupees.<sup>7</sup> The latter also maintained an excellent college at Berhampore called Berhampore Krishnath College, at an annual expense of Rs.60,000. Several boardings and a number of messes were attached to the college. Along with the school, these cost the Kassimbazar Estate another Rs.15,000 per annum. Owing to the large influx of

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1. The Englishman: 4 Dec. 1912, p.4.

2. Bengal Zamindars, p.102.

3. Carmichael to Hardinge 7 Nov. 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol.Valo, pt.1, p.401.

4. Nat.N.P.: week ending 18 Nov. 1911, pp.1389,1392.

5. The Bengalee: 18 Feb, 1911, p.6.

6. 'Rep.Wards Estates 1913-14', B.R.P.: Jan. 1915, Vol.9656, p.110.

7. Chiefs, Nobles & Zamindars, pp.449,523.

students, additions had to be made, and the sum of Rs.150,000 was spent to build another large building. He further spent Rs.60,000 annually to maintain schools of higher education at Beldanga, Saidabad, Saktipur, Jabagram, Ranchi, Kamargaon, Habaspur, Bilka, Ethora, Srisgunj, Kamarpanch and Panchigram where children of his tenants received education at a nominal fee.<sup>1</sup> He also founded a Zamindari Training College to train people who wished to join zamindari staff.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Nashipur founded schools at his zamindari to which children born on his estate had free access.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Paikpara at his death left one lakh of rupees to raise the status of the Kandi School to that of a College.<sup>4</sup> The only college in Burdwan district was maintained by the Burdwan family to which a collegiate school was also attached. It also maintained a high school at Kalna affiliated to the college.<sup>5</sup> The college further had a girls' school, a Sanskrit Chatuspathi, a Hindi Pathsala and a Muktab under its supervision.<sup>6</sup>

The nobleman who outshone all others in the educational field was the Maharaja of Kassimbazar. His unique ideas and far-sighted approach were things unto themselves at that time. He advocated the need

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1. Bengal Zamindars: p.2.
  2. The Bangalee: 17 Aug. 1911, p.2.
  3. D.C. Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, p.118.
  4. The Englishman: 17 Jan. 1919, p.12.
  5. B.D.G.: Burdwan, p.182.
  6. The Englishman: 24 Apr. 1916, p.11.

for a superior system of education. From the chair of the Bengal Landholders Association he proclaimed: "I say that the work of education is the most urgent and pressing need of our country. We want better education and more varieties of it." <sup>1</sup> He backed up his words by establishing a mining school at Ethora and a polytechnic at Calcutta. The former was founded in 1915 to fill the shortage of colliery managers in the country. He realised that the shortage made it imperative to import such experts from abroad. Before a man could sit for the second-class colliery managers certificate examination, he was required to have spent three years at a mine, and for the first-class certificate another two years. At Ethora the students were given practical training which could be counted as time spent at the mine itself, alongside the normal textbook studies. There was also a scheme whereby the student spent every morning at a mine, while the evenings and weekends were used for theoretical instructions. <sup>2</sup> The polytechnic was even more revolutionary in character. The Maharaja aimed to train students in a manner which would give them a better chance to make a living later. Simultaneously with the usual preparation for the matriculation examination, industrial instruction was imparted. The staff consisted of not only theorists but engineers actually practising

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1. The Englishman: 8 July 1912, p.9.

2. Ibid: 11 Dec. 1917, p.9.

as consultants, making it possible for students to get the same opportunity as apprentices. Moreover, the students' handiworks produced at the institute were sold on their behalf with the profits subsequently being used by them to pay their fees.<sup>1</sup> The training commenced in the primary class with little boys being given some idea of the practical application of geometrical principles in paper cutting, clay modelling and basket weaving.<sup>2</sup>

The nobles looked at education as an instrument for the earning of a living. Keeping that in mind, they laid emphasis on teaching practical work in their institutions. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar's mining school and the polytechnic were perfect examples of such an education. The introduction of weaving and needle work in the curriculum of the institutions of the Maharaja of Dinajpur and Nawab Mohammad Ali Chaudhury were also directed towards the same end. It was because of this attitude that nobles such as the Maharaja of Burdwan, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee and the Nawab of Dacca opposed the introduction of compulsory education at the primary level, with over-emphasis on literary work in the form they suspected was being advocated by Gokhale and his associates. The Maharaja of Burdwan pointed out that such a method could turn people away from

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1. The Englishman: 14 Apr. 1916, p.3.

2. Ibid: 13 Nov. 1918, p.6.



traditional occupations leading to a vacuum in the fields of manual labour. Simultaneously, there would be an increase in the number of semi-educated unemployed drifting towards the cities.<sup>1</sup> Raja R~~u~~shee Case Law vehemently advocated that literary education should never be allowed to encroach upon the boys' time normally devoted to work upon their ancestral occupations.<sup>2</sup> He maintained that, along with literary education, traditional occupations should also be taught. In other words, a boy from an agricultural family should not only be taught to read and write but also civics, handicrafts and scientific agriculture, so that he might secure a better preparation for his life's occupation.<sup>3</sup> The Nawab of Dacca pointed out that the emphasis should be placed on improving the country's industrial and agricultural 'know-how' and business acumen, rather than encouraging the poor to spend money they could hardly afford on primary education.<sup>4</sup> Such nobles were able to put forward their views effectively, since their influence permeated a large portion of the educational institutions in the province.

The position of the nobles as founders and financiers of the educational institutions made it possible for them, despite their lack of formal education, to come into direct contact with and

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1. B.C. Mahtab: Studies, pp.6,7,54-59.

2. 'Beng.Primary Education Bill 1917', B.L.C.D. : 1919, pp. 152-153.

3. Ibid:

4. The Englishman: 18 Oct. 1911, p.7.

influence the student body. Individuals such as the Nawab of Murshidabad<sup>1</sup> and the Maharajas of Burdwan and Kassimbazar regularly presided over the annual prize distributions, festivals and other important functions of their institutes. The Maharaja of Burdwan even invited the students' faculty to periodic tea parties at his house, while the Maharani entertained the students from the girls' school affiliated to the college.<sup>2</sup> Apart from their own institutions, it was possible to find senior nobles like the Maharajas of Burdwan<sup>3</sup>, Kassimbazar<sup>4</sup> and Nadia<sup>5</sup> being invited by independent institutions like the Mahakali Pathshala, the Sanskrit College and the Krishnagar C.M.S. School to preside over their prize distributions.

Their contact with individual students were made further possible by the number of scholarships financed from their estate funds. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar supported five free students and paid half the cost of five others in his polytechnic<sup>6</sup>, and allotted fifty scholarships at the Sanskrit College<sup>7</sup>. He also sent students to Japan, America and Australia at his own expense to learn industrial work.<sup>8</sup> The Raja of Naldunga established scholarships for

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1. The Englishman: 6 June, 1911, p.6.

2. Ibid: 5 May 1915, p.7.

3. Ibid: 7 Dec. 1915, p.9.

4. Ibid: 24 Feb. 1917, p.3.

5. The Bengalee: 8 March 1911, p.6.

6. The Englishman: 14 Apr. 1916, p.3.

7. Ibid: 24 Feb. 1917, p.3.

8. Chiefs, Nobles & Zamindars, p.523.

Sanskrit learning, and donated medals for female education.<sup>1</sup> The Dighapatia Estate endowed the Rajshahi Girls' Aided School with an amount yielding Rs.180 per annum for needy students, and founded three scholarships for the Girls' School at Boaliya.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Nadia had the right as a founding member to nominate a number of free students at the Krishnagar College.<sup>3</sup> The Kumar of Paikpara founded two scholarships at the Calcutta University for the students of the High School at Kandi.<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneously with schools and colleges, a number of noblemen established and maintained libraries which were open for the use of the general public. Out of the five public libraries at Burdwan, the Burdwan Raj Library was the largest and the most visited.<sup>5</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar built a large library at Nawadwip,<sup>6</sup> and Nawab Syed Mohammad Ali Chaudhury founded a public library at Comilla.<sup>7</sup> Half the cost of the Woodburn Public Library at Bogra was borne by the Nawab of Bogra.<sup>8</sup> Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yusuf Hosain was a member of the executive committee of the Dacca Northbrook Hall Library,<sup>9</sup> and Raja Reshee Case Law was a trustee

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1. Whos Who: pt.VIII, pp.41,42.

2. 'Rajas of Rajshahi', C.R.no.CXI: 1873, p.40.

3. Ind.N.P.: week ending 20 Feb. 1915, p.272.

4. Kumar to Lt.Gov. 19 July 1910, B.J.P.: Apr. 1911, Vol.8676, p.41.

5. B.D.G.: Burdwan, p.182.

6. Bengal Zamirdars, p.2.

7. Whos Who, pt.V, p.29.

8. Nat.N.P.: week ending 7 June 1913, p.53.

9. Whos Who, pt.V, p.27.

of the Ram Mohan Library.<sup>1</sup> The Jorhat (Rangpur) family donated a monthly subscription to the Mahagunj Library and Reading Room. The Sureunali Sahayya Bhandar and Prativa Library received large contributions from the Sovabazar family.<sup>2</sup> Raja Jyot Kumar Mukerjee donated the substantial sum of Rs.25,000 for the construction of the Duke Library at Howrah.<sup>3</sup>

Their interest in educational facilities often went beyond the limits of their zamindaris. The National Medical College of India was largely financed by a number of noblemen of India,<sup>4</sup> and continued to receive substantial help from the Maharaja of Kassimbazar even later.<sup>5</sup> The large donation given by the Maharaja of Burdwan to the Calcutta University<sup>6</sup> was surpassed by the Maharaja of Kassimbazar who was appointed a Honorary Fellow for life for his generosity.<sup>7</sup> He also specified that Rs.20,000 was to be allotted for research in ancient Indian mathematics and astronomy.<sup>8</sup> He further granted one lakh of rupees for the founding of the Benaras Hindu University<sup>9</sup>, and was appointed one of the first trustees of the University.<sup>10</sup> His contribution was closely followed in amount by Raja Reshee Case Law.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Bengal Zamindars: p.71.

2. The Bengalee: 18 Feb. 1911, p.5.

3. Hopkyns to Comm.Burd.Div. 26 Feb. 1914, B.G.P.: Aug. 1915, Vol.9640, p.246.

4. 'National Medical College', R & S.D.P.: 1913, Vol.7625, File.4510.

5. The Englishman: 15 May 1911, p.6.

6. Ibid: 2 July 1917, p.11

7. Carmichael to Hardinge 25 June 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol.Va7, pt.I., p.304.

8. The Bengalee: 10 Jan. 1911, p.7.

9. 'Gov.Gen.Legis.Coun. 22 March 1915', R & S.D.P.: 1915, Vol.853, File.7762, p.526 (of proceedings).

10. The Englishman: 26 Apr.1911, p.5.

11. Bengal Zamindars, p.71.

Out of Rs.37,000 donated by private individuals for Surendranath Banerjea's Ripon College Building Fund, Rs.24,700 were provided by noblemen.<sup>1</sup> Similarly for the upgrading of the Ananda Mohan College at Mymensingh the nobles contributed Rs.104,320 out of a total sum of Rs.123,245.<sup>2</sup>

The second decade of the century experienced a forceful movement by the Indian Muslims to establish a Muslim University. A meeting was held at Aligarh in 1911, at which it was decided to form a Committee for the Foundation of a Mohammedan University. The Aga Khan was elected the president and the vice presidents were selected from the various provinces. From Bengal the two nominees were the Nawabs of Murshidabad and Dacca.<sup>3</sup> At a following meeting held at Calcutta, Nawabs Shamsul Huda and A.F.M. Abdur Rahman were prominent speakers, the latter making a stirring speech for the movement.<sup>4</sup> By the middle of the year a public meeting was held at Dacca under the presidency of the Nawab of Dacca to form a provincial branch of the fund raising committee. After the presidential speech, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury explained the objects of the proposed university.<sup>5</sup> He later published an article in the Moslem Hitaishi urging the necessity for founding a Muslim University in India on the ground

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1. S.N. Banerjea to Kerr 29 March 1912, B.G.P.: May 1912, Vol.8923, p.52.

2. 'Proceedings of College Council 25 June 1912', B.G.P.: Jan. 1913, Vol.9137, p.52d.

3. The Englishman: 21 Jan. 1911, p.7.

4. Ibid: 25 Jan. 1911, p.3.

5. Ibid: 18 July, 1911, p.5.

that the existing universities as currently constituted could not be expected to make proper arrangements for the education of the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> His sincere work for the advancement of education of his fellow religionists made him a leading figure in the eyes of the Muslim students. It was not surprising that at a largely attended meeting organised by the Bengal Mahomedan College Students Association he should be invited to preside over the occasion.<sup>2</sup>

Along with educational institutions, intellectual societies greatly influenced the intelligentsia of Bengal. Once more the nobles could be found taking a prominent place in them. They contributed both financially and physically towards the formation of a number of intellectual circles within the province. The most renowned gathering of the Bengal intellectuals was the monthly meeting of the Sahitya Sabha held at the Sovabazar Rajbari and presided over by the Raja. After his demise, the leading figure of the Sabha became the Maharaja of Kassimbazar.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan was the vice president of the society, and his contribution to the publication fund made it possible to publish the Banger Kobita, so popular amongst the reading public.<sup>4</sup> He later became the president of the Provincial Literary Conference.<sup>5</sup> Another important intellectual body was the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, also founded by the Raja of Sovabazar,<sup>6</sup> to which the Raja of Lalgola

1. Nat.R.P.: week ending 19 Aug. 1911, p.1027.

2. The Englishman: 14 Apr. 1913, p.6.

3. Ibid: 3 Nov. 1913, p.5.

4. Ibid: 26 Aug. 1912, p.3.

5. Ibid: 16 Apr. 1915, p.6.

6. Whos Who, pt.VIII, p.39.

contributed Rs.30,000 for the publication of useful books.<sup>1</sup> The Raja of Lalgola was well known for his liberality and his patronage of literature.<sup>2</sup> In 1915 the Maharaja of Burdwan issued a letter to the Secretary of the society for circulation among the members of the Parishad throughout the country. As a staunch patron of literature, he invited the attention of those interested in the progress of Bengali literature to the fact that, though the Literary Conference held regular sittings, there had been no real, visible progress in that sphere. As a remedy he proposed the offering of money prizes for learned essays to be read at the Conference. He personally offered one such prize and requested others to follow suit.<sup>3</sup> The North Bengal Literary Conference also received the support of nobles such as the Rajas of Dinajpur, Kassimbazar, Susang, Lalgola, Gouripore, Chanchal, and Dighapatia.<sup>4</sup> The fourth Bengal Literary Conference found the Maharaja of Susang as the president of the reception committee, in which the Maharajas of Muktagacha and Kassimbazar played important roles.<sup>5</sup> The fifth session was presided over by the Maharaja of Kassimbazar where reference was made to his "uniform association with every cause and effort towards the advancement of literature in Bengal".<sup>6</sup> The Maharaja of Natore presided over the Kalighat Sahitya Samity<sup>7</sup>

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1. The Englishman: 2 Sept. 1914, p.8.

2. Ind.N.P.: week ending 12 June 1915, p.863.

3. The Englishman: 10 Dec. 1915, p.8.

4. The Bengalee: 10 Jan. 1911, p.6.

5. Ibid: 16 Apr. 1911, p.6.

6. Ibid: 3 March 1912, p.4.

7. Ibid: 2 June 1914, p.2.

and the Bhowanipore Sahitya Samity.<sup>1</sup>

Though less than the humanities, science was given its due importance by the nobles. The Raja of Santosh played an important role in its popularisation as a member of the Executive Committee for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education in India.<sup>2</sup> With the object of founding an Astronomical Society of Bengal, a meeting was held under the presidency of the Maharaja of Kassimbazar, and supported by the Rajas of Susang and Sovabazar at the Kassimbazar Rajbari at Mirzapur.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar was so closely identified with the movement for the improvement and dissemination of Bengal literature, scientific knowledge and general education that the Surhid Parishad, a Bengali intellectual club at Bankipore, welcomed him as a prominent celebrity.<sup>4</sup> The Maharaja Kumar of Dighapatia ventured into the field of archeology, and organised the Varendra Research Party to work on archeological sites and relics.<sup>5</sup>

Like the Hindu nobles the Muslims, too, were interested in intellectual circles. Nawab A.F.M. Abdur Rahman was the Honorary Secretary to the Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta,<sup>6</sup> and the Nawab of Murshidabad was the patron of the Calcutta Historical

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1. The Bengalee: 5 June, 1914, p.2.

2. Whos Who, pt.V, p.7.

3. The Englishman; 28 Feb. 1912, p.6.

4. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 28 Feb. 1914, p.145.

5. The Bengalee: 19 Jan. 1911, p.6.

6. A.F.M.A.Rahman to Sec.Gen.Dept.Beng. 27 Nov. 1914,  
R & S.D.P.: 1912, Vol.725, File.1797.



Society.<sup>1</sup> The gathering of the intellectuals in the Muslim Anjumans also had immense influence over the educated Muslims of the province. Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury was the president of the Anjuman-i-Mifid-ul-Islam,<sup>2</sup> and the Nawab of Murshidabad was the patron of Anjuman-i-Muslaman-i-Bangala.<sup>3</sup> Nawab Syed Jahandar Mirza was the president and the Nawab of Dacca the vice president of the Musalman-i-Bangala Lalbagh subdivision.<sup>4</sup> But the most important body of Muslim intellectuals was the Provincial Mahomedan Education Conference in which it was common to find writers, philosophers, religious thinkers, social theorists, political commentators, jurists and all others of similar standing. Its aim was to afford an opportunity for them to meet annually for an interchange of views tending to foster good feelings and create a spirit of sympathy, solidarity and cooperation; to provide a fit place for the discussion of local wants and needs of Muslims; and to constitute a recognised centre of thought, education and culture.<sup>5</sup> Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury presided over the Conference in 1911.<sup>6</sup> The Mussalman, reporting on the Dacca Sitting of the Conference, stated: "the success of the Conference was not to a little measure due to the personality of the Chairman of the Reception Committee

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1. Whos Who, pt.VIII, p.4.

2. The Englishman: 7 Aug. 1917. p.6.

3. Whos Who, pt.VIII, p.4.

4. 'List of Associations', B.P.P.: Sept. 1911, Vol.8683, p.46.

5. The Englishman: 6 Oct. 1911, p.5.

6. The Bengalee: 15 Apr. 1915, p.6.

Sir Salimulla, Nawab Bahadur of Dacca." <sup>1</sup> Another such association, though of less importance, was the Malda Education League, which counted among its patrons Nawab Sujat Ali Beg and Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury. <sup>2</sup>

Musical circles also found the nobles taking an interest in their sphere of intellectual activity. The Indian Sangit Sangha was presided over by the Maharaja of Natore, while the vice patrons were the Maharanis of Cooch Behar and Burdwan. <sup>3</sup> The Raja of Narajole usually presided over the meeting of the Midnapore Sangit Parishad, and substantially helped the music circle with men and money. <sup>4</sup> Raja Jyot Kumar Mukerjee was the president of the Saraswati Sangit Samity of Bally. <sup>5</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan patronised the Bharati Musical Association. <sup>6</sup> He further, along with the Maharaja of Kassimbazar, supported the Sangit Sangha. <sup>7</sup> As a matter of fact, the Burdwan Estate's court musician was the celebrated Prof. Gopesur Banerji. <sup>8</sup> His fame was closely contested by the Raja of Tajhat's court musician, Ustad Ramobodhi Misra. <sup>9</sup> The Raja of Kakina's string orchestra was also highly admired. <sup>10</sup> As for Raja Saurindra Mohan Tagore, it would not be far wrong to suggest that he was the most renowned musician in Bengal during his time. <sup>11</sup>

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1. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 25 Apr. 1914, p.265.

2. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 16 Sept. 1916, p.1257.

3. The Englishman: 18 Feb. 1915, p.6.

4. Ibid: 8 Feb. 1917, p.4.

5. Ibid: 3 Feb.1914,p.3.

6. The Bengalee: 11 June 1914, p.2. 7. Ibid: 1 July, 1916,  
p.4.

8. Ibid: 3 Feb. 1916, p.3.

9. Ibid: 12 July 1914, p.2.

10. The Englishman: 15 Feb. 1911, p.5.

11. Whos Who, pt.VIII, p.12,13.

The evolution of institutional education usually goes shoulder to shoulder with the development of organised sport. It is especially true in regard to the system of education introduced into India by the British. But the love of sports was not restricted to the intelligentsia only. To this day sporting events in Calcutta cause such intense excitement that frequently the police have to use force to curb the agitated spirit of the spectators. In the second decade of this century the enthusiasm of the sporting public greatly increased. For the first time, in 1912, a Bengali team, the Mohan Bagan, had defeated a team consisting wholly of European players. It was one of the strongest military teams in India.<sup>1</sup>

The nobles patronised sport as they did any other aspect of social life in Bengal. A number of them donated cups and shields to be awarded for sporting events. The ones most frequently reported in the newspapers were the Cooch Behar<sup>2</sup> and Sir Salimulla<sup>3</sup> cups for football, closely followed by the Ban Bihari League cup at Burdwan.<sup>4</sup> Raja An Bihari Kapur was the patron of the Burdwan Boys Athletic Club.<sup>5</sup> The R.N. Shield was presented by the Bhowal family.<sup>6</sup> The Murshidabad cup, open to the football clubs of Murshidabad, Nadia, Rajshahi and Birbhum, was also very popular in the area.<sup>7</sup> The finals of the Cooch Behar tournament were frequently played on the rajbari grounds at

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1. The Bengalee: 14 Feb. 1912, p.4.

2. The Englishman: 5 Aug. 1911, p.3.

3. Ibid: 16 Aug. 1911, p.3.

4. Ibid: 11 Oct. 1915, p.4.

5. The Bengalee: 3 Sept. 1914, p.2.

6. The Englishman: 2 Oct. 1917, p.6.

7. The Bengalee: 4 July, 1916, p.7.

Cooch Behar in the presence of the Maharaja.<sup>1</sup> The Maharajas of Cooch Behar,<sup>2</sup> Natore<sup>3</sup> and Mymensingh<sup>4</sup> financed and managed popular cricket elevens. The Maharaja of Burdwan organised an annual athletic event for his Darjeeling tenantry.<sup>5</sup> The Cooch Behar family's interest in sport persuaded the Sovabazar Sporting Club<sup>6</sup> and the Kalighat Sports Association<sup>7</sup> to nominate the Maharaja as president. Similarly, Raja Jyot Kumar Mukerjee was created a life member by the Aheritolla Sporting Club.<sup>8</sup>

Their prominence in social life and their seniority in the zamindari class allowed the nobles to be in touch with other important personalities and groups in Bengal. Their parties were attended by a variety of prominent personalities of all creeds and communities, of industry and commerce and of public thought. At such meetings it was possible to associate without formality.<sup>9</sup> Even the reception at Calcutta in honour of Gandhi was given at the residence of the Maharaja of Kassimbazar.<sup>10</sup> Festive occasions like the Jhulanjatra<sup>11</sup> and Holi<sup>12</sup> were frequently used by the nobles as opportunities for the throwing of at-homes and garden parties. On such occasions the prominent personalities of the locality, including other

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1. The Englishman: 15 May 1914, p.3.

2. Ibid: 27 Nov. 1914, p.3.

3. Ibid: 6 Dec. 1912, p.2.

4. Ibid: 24 Sept. 1912, p.3.

5. Ibid: 16 Oct. 1912, p.5.

6. Ibid: 21 Feb. 1914, p.11.

7. Ibid: 2 Feb. 1915, p.5.

8. Ibid: 28 July, 1915, p.7.

9. Ibid: 16 Feb. 1911, pp.5,6 (Darbhanga)

10. Ibid: 15 March 1915, p.6.

11. D.C. Boulger: Maharaja Devi Sinha, p.141.

12. 'Rajas of Rajshahi'. C.R.no.CAL: 1873, p.40, (Dighapatia).

zamindars, pleaders, officials<sup>1</sup>, planters<sup>2</sup> and all persons with any claim to importance received special invitations from the nobles.<sup>3</sup> In the same gathering, it was possible to come across members of the Executive Council, lawyers, jurists, university professors and journalists.<sup>4</sup> At times when such invitees were expected from Calcutta, special trains were provided in which the guests could travel free.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the nobles' claim to "natural" leadership was not without substance. By "natural" they meant that they were naturally, or by virtue of their birth, placed in the advantageous position whence they could influence the majority of the people and the largest number of interest groups. Their economic and social influence over various interest groups effected practically every aspect of life in rural Bengal, and to a certain extent even affected the life of the city. These economic and social links built over the generations provided benefits to a large number of people which generated feelings of obligation and loyalty amongst the recipients. Subsequently the institution being hereditary and continuous assisted in the growth of a depersonalised charisma which helped the nobles to retain traditional authority in their territories. Thus a network of channels which could

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1. The Englishman: 7 March 1911, p.5 (Bogra)

2. 'Rajas of Rajshahi', C.R.no.CXI: 1873, p.39  
(Dighapatia)

3. D.C.Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, p.141.

4. The Englishman: 19 Jan. 1911, p.6 (Sovabazar)

5. Ibid: 20 Jan. 1911, p.6 (Jyot Kumar Mukerjee)

be utilised to influence the population developed. Sociologists maintain that three different processes of influence can be distinguished. Compliance can be said to occur when an individual accepts influence because he hopes to achieve a favourable reaction from a person or group. He adopts the behaviour because he expects to gain specific rewards, and avoid specific disapproval by conforming. Identification can be said to occur when an individual wants to maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group. This relationship takes the form of a reciprocal role relationship. Internalization can be said to occur when an individual accepts influence because it is congruent with his value system. He may find it congenial to his needs. The basis of the power of the influencing agent thus are means control, attractiveness and credibility. The above analysis shows that the nobles of Bengal answered to the definition of influence-agents in all respects.<sup>1</sup> This entire network of influencing channels was sustained by the income derived from their large estates.

To sum up, we find that as far as the zamindars were concerned, the nobles were their obvious leaders. They set the pace for the entire class. During times of financial difficulties, they were known to step in and act as the junior zamindars' trustees and managers. Moreover, their interests involving the permanent

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1. H.C. Kelman: 'Compliance, identification, & internalization - three processes of attitude change', Journal of Conflict Resolution', no.2: 1958, pp.53,54.

estates being identical, the nobles' easy access to people in authority provided a bridge for the other zamindars. Added to this was the fact that during social gatherings at the local nobleman's residence the others could also conveniently meet important dignitaries and draw their attention to their own group or individual needs. Lastly, as the large estates of the nobles more or less surrounded the properties of the smaller landlords, improvements in the form of canals and waterworks within their zamindaris tended to benefit others as well.

The tenure holders, who formed the bulk of the rural bhadralok community, also had their economic interest linked with their respective zamindars. The income of their joint families varied from the reasonably affluent to the very poor. The income of the landlord shared by the multi-layered section of the community acted as a supplement which, in times of economic distress, became all-important. When an earning member lost his job, became disabled or died, the tenure income was the primary cushion that sustained the dependents through the difficult period. Thus, it acted as a social safety-valve for the unemployed, for the old and the retired, for widows and orphans, for the sick and the disabled, and other such people who could not earn a living. Moreover, their links with the zamindar, being personal and intimate, entailed that in times of stress they could derive benefits in the form of remission, allowing them time to

readjust to their new situations. This intimate relationship also made it possible to place their difficulties before the zamindar for his perusal during his periodic tours. At such times the zamindar could take an immediate 'spot' decision to relieve the grievances of the tenantry. The Maharaj Kumar of Mymensingh gained tremendous popularity during one such tour. He settled all disputes with the tenants amicably and remitted nearly the entire unbarred interests and damages of the prajas. In addition, another mahal got remission of half the principal rent from two to five years owing to their deplorable condition.<sup>1</sup>

The income that did come into the nobleman's coffers was further utilised for various purposes than their personal consumption. A large portion of it was doubtless used for the essential expenses required for estates managements. Moreover, the above examination of their social activities show that their position as zamindars cum noblemen called for substantial expenditures in various other fields. These functions had been established by their forbears of an earlier era, and the amount ear-marked for such purposes was not a small sum.<sup>2</sup> The amount expended for welfare purposes acted as an indirect method of providing the society with social services. In a society where the welfare state had not yet taken shape, the indirect processes

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1. The Bengalee: 6 Sept. 1912, p.1.

2. See Appendix II.



served an important purpose. Apart from the civic activities which benefited the entire area, the rural bhadralok community was provided with inexpensive or free schools, colleges, libraries, medical facilities, etc. It was acknowledged in the Bengalee that more than half the educational institutes, dispensaries, hospitals, etc. were founded and maintained by the zamindars of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The numerous temples and mosques that they maintained also served socio-economic purposes. Aside from their role in providing food for thousands of poor people daily, they also acted as places of refuge where food and shelter could be found by the old and the helpless. The caste establishments which they maintained as dalpatis and the numerous benevolent funds which they managed as zamindars also provided refuge for widows, orphans, the disabled, the old, and in addition acted as 'stopgaps' for poor students and also new graduates searching for employment. Since none of these indigenous institutions had the disagreeable reputation of being tantamount to 'handouts', it obliged no bhadralok recipient of such benefits to lose face in his society. On the contrary, to retire to a temple or mosque, or to eat and to live in an unpolluted caste ashram, were considered acts of piety. Finally, during times of scarcity and epidemics the system provided a machinery which could be quickly mobilised to alleviate the peoples' distress. Thus rescue work

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1. The Bengalee: 27 Sept. 1911, p.3.

and the supply of emergency provisions, together with refuge for the homeless etc., could be promptly carried out.

Bengal society's reliance on the large, permanently settled landholdings is markedly visible in the replies received by the Land Revenue Commission in 1938, which surveyed the situation existing in Bengal from the turn of the century. The Middle Class Peoples' Association of Mymensingh emphasised that Permanent Settlement did not cripple the financial resources of the country. On the other hand "a secured tenantry, a strong middle class, and an affluent aristocracy emerged as a result of the Permanent Settlement". Its abolition would lead to complete disaster, since it would render the question of unemployment more acute. "The middle class people who form the backbone of society ... will be extinct", said the Association ominously.<sup>1</sup> In the same tone the Peoples' Association of Dacca stated that the long continuance of the Permanent Settlement had "induced the middle class intelligentsia to invest their savings in land and annulment of the Permanent Settlement will ruin the middle class".<sup>2</sup> Its continuance was also advocated by all the Bar Associations that sent replies to the questionnaire.<sup>3</sup>

The Manager of Paikpara Estate, who came in

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1. L.R.C.: Vol.VI, pp.78-80.

2. Ibid: Vol.VI, p.91.

3. Ibid: See Vol.VI - argued from economic and legalistic point of view.

constant contact with the zamindari staffs, pointed out that its abolition would result "in the unemployment of their officers; also in the partial unemployment of the people dependent on them - people such as pleaders, local craftsmen depending on the patronage of the local landholders and so on; also in the limitation in the source of supply of capital to indigenous or modern industries; and in the fall in national demand so far as the purchasing power of those classes is concerned."<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the intermediaries, the Manager of Kassimbazar predicted that "these middlemen form the bulk of the bhadralok middle classes and they will be driven by want to join the communists or socialists".<sup>2</sup>

The Bengal Landholders Association, comprising the different categories of landholders, argued that because of the Permanent Settlement "there may be a loss [to the State] according to mathematical calculation but on the whole it is a gain to the people. Ultimately individual wealth alone contributes to the wealth of the nation and on that depends all prosperity."<sup>3</sup> The Bankura Landholders Association succinctly pointed out that if the system was abolished "the Government officials and their myrmidons will prove to be more oppressive than the zamindars' agents who are generally

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1. L.R.C.: Vol.IV, p.380.

2. Ibid: Vol.V, p.111.

3. Ibid: Vol.III. p.68.

local men".<sup>1</sup> The British Indian Association emphasised that under such conditions "everybody and everything will be thrown out of gear".<sup>2</sup>

The Director of Land Record and Survey, B.B. Mukerjee, summed up the situation with: "the large percentage of population depended upon land in some shape or other is proof of the influence of the land system on the social organism as a whole in Bengal. It is essential to bear in mind when one is asked to deal radically with it..... To pull down that structure will have repercussions so widespread that the consequences are certain to be chaos and anarchy".<sup>3</sup>

The Permanent Settlement, with the nobles at its apex, was the very foundation on which the Bengal society rested. The above examination leaves no doubt that there was a great deal of truth in the nobles' claim to being the natural leaders. Their social eminence as zamindar-noblemen, and their prominence in social activities, supplemented by the fact that a huge portion of the population was economically linked with them, created a situation whereby the group generated traditional authority activated by depersonalised charisma over virtually the entire population of the province.

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1. L.R.C.: Vol.III, p.32.

2. Ibid: Vol.III, p.194.

3. Ibid: Vol.V, p.43.

CHAPTER III.INTERMEDIARIES IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

The socio-political function of any group in British India, and its importance and position within the Indian fabric, must necessarily be measured from two different standpoints: its authority over its compatriots, and its capacity to influence the Raj. Without the former the latter would not be possible, and without the latter the former would be authority but with little value. The previous chapter analysed the former; this chapter examines the latter.

The nobles' traditional authority over the socio-economic life of the province did not mean that the Government would automatically invite them to "collaborate" with it in politics. Mere socio-economic influence without any political competence would never have induced the British to rely on the group to act as a supplementary support to uphold the administration.

There was a time when the Bengal nobles actually supervised the administrative machinery within their own territories. A study of the sanads recognising and appointing a new zamindar even until as late as the twilight years of the nizamat reveals that he was regarded as the local embodiment of the executive, legislative and judicial authority in his zamindari by the imperial and Bengal authorities. He played an important role as the revenue collector and the keeper of the peace. His political power increased

conversely with the centre's decrease of administrative control over the provinces.<sup>1</sup> He not only defended the territory against external enemies, with the aid of armed retainers, but also administered the law and maintained peace and order with a large force of rural police known as thanadars, phanridars, chaukidars, and paiks, who helped in protecting the property, collecting the revenue and in carrying out other services personal to the zamindar.<sup>2</sup> In the Fifth Report it was stated that the Burdwan Estate retained 2,400 armed constables and 1,900 paiks for the maintenance of law and order. For the same purpose the zamindar also maintained law courts with himself as the highest court of appeal.<sup>3</sup> In the bigger estates there were bakhshis immediately under the zamindar, who were responsible for compensating the sufferers for their loss. Moreover, travellers were furnished with safe convoys, and merchants protected in the conveyance of their merchandise. The zamindars were also in charge of village ponds, village ferries and village roads, and performed more or less the duties of the justice of the peace.<sup>4</sup>

The nobles were later divested of most of this administrative authority apart from the collection of the revenue and the administration of the machinery involved in its collection.<sup>5</sup> The only exceptions

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1. P.B.Calkins: 'Ruling Groups in Bengal', J.A.S., Aug. 1970, pp. 799-803.
  2. Administrative Report British India (Bengal): 1911-12, p. 84.
  3. L.R.C.; Vol. V, p. 98.
  4. A.C. Roy: History of Bengal, p. 353.
  5. They were also expected to help maintain law and order. But this police function was based on convention rather than statutes. The point is further elaborated in Chapter V.

were the tribal chiefs of the Chittagong Hill tracts.

As late as the decade under review, the tribal chiefs retained considerable political authority. Complaints of various types were laid directly before the chiefs despite the presence of the Government Superintendent. Petty cases brought to the notice of the Superintendent were transferred immediately for trial at the chiefs' courts. In cognisable cases the complainants were allowed to bring matters directly to the chiefs' notice without having to seek prior permission of the Superintendent or the police. In cases of petty theft the police forwarded the matter to the chiefs and, having done so, made no further investigations of their own. For such purposes the chiefs themselves had a crude type of investigating agency. Their local agents were known as darogas and their peons acted as the local constables.<sup>1</sup> They also had jurisdiction over offences of extortion, robbery, dakoity, lurking, house trespass or house breaking in cases where the property did not exceed Rs.500 in value.<sup>2</sup> They were capable of enforcing fines and restitutions and imposing imprisonment. Even the law was to an extent their own, as the Code of Criminal Procedure was limited in its application within their estates, and the chiefs' courts were expected

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1. K.C.De to Chief Sec.Beng. 24 Feb. 1917, B.P.P.: May, 1917, Vol.10116, p.165.

2. Chakma Raja to Comm.Chittagong Div. 23 July 1916, Ibid, p.167.

to follow the spirit of the Code rather than being bound to the letter.<sup>1</sup>

The tribal zamindaris being remote and relatively inaccessible, and most of the tribal villages being inconstant in location, it was found expedient by the political authorities to allow the chiefs to retain a considerable amount of political function. But their case was rather the exception than the rule. Even the native princes, in whose name all the administrative functions were carried out in their respective principalities, had lost all such authority within their zamindaris in the directly administered part of British Bengal. Doubtless it was possible to come across references to zamindari courts even in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> But in reality that was the misuse of a popular term to signify a place for the amicable settlement of rent disputes by mutual consent. The withdrawal of all political authority is noticeable in the language used in the sanads of the twentieth century. It consisted of a mere line or two conferring the noble title and recognising the proprietary right over the inherited zamindari.

One might conclude that the nobles had no political function. It was frequently said that politically they had become antiquated and useless. Yet one is also

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1. Mawson to Comm.Chittagong Div. 26 Sept. 1916,  
Ibid, p.171.

2. P.Sinha: Nineteenth Century Bengal, p.31.



faced with the contradictory observation that the "collaboration" of the large landholders was of prime importance to the Raj.<sup>1</sup> This was so because the nobles had lost their position as the official class. Their political function had undergone a change and, over the years, they had acquired the position of intermediaries in public affairs. This conversion of political role came about gradually over the duration of the nineteenth century.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century a great number of young and inexperienced British officials holding key positions, such as local magistrates and district officers, administered Bengal with little or no respect for the desires and aspirations of the indigenous inhabitants, since these were not considered essential for effective administration. From the elevated heights of unquestionable authority they were doubtless cloaked with the belief that their mission was to impose the superior systems of the west on the uncivilised east. They apparently felt no need to rule nor introduce innovations by careful persuasion.

In time the system went through considerable change. With the increase of responsibility and experience, one aspect of the change was the conviction that greater Indian participation at different levels of administration was necessary for more effective

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1. A. Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism, p.10.

government. It was felt necessary to increase the number of Indians who had been educated through English methods and matured with English ideas, and could act as interpreters of British policy and educate the local population in the benefits of British rule.

By the middle of the century it became further apparent that communications between the rulers and the ruled had still not improved or become as effective as had been hoped. The terrible events of the Sepoy Mutiny brought home to the Administration the dangers arising from the total exclusion of Indians from the legislative process.<sup>1</sup> This realisation resulted in a further change of approach. Legislative Councils with nominated Indian members were created, and it became an accepted practice to circulate proposed legislation for the purpose of seeking advice from the leading political associations and eminent individuals as well. This principle was founded on the conviction that the government of a country such as India by a handful of Civil Servants, acting through hundreds of thousands of Indian subordinates could very easily be made impossible. It depended upon the passive consent of the masses, and the entire cooperation of a large number of educated men.<sup>2</sup> Without their support, control of India could be lost. The process of consultative politics was at its height during the first two decades of the twentieth

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1. Ind.Constit.Ref., p.31.

2. Kerr: 'Memorandum on the Representation of India (Round Table)': Weston ; Vol.10, Loose Papers.

century. Practically no law was enacted nor reform advocated without the issuing of circulars and the making of a close survey of the replies to fathom the public's reception of the proposed schemes. The question that follows is who were these eminent individuals and which were the political associations utilised for assessing public reaction to contemplated legislation? A careful examination shows that the people and the societies selected for this purpose were not chosen at random. Over the nineteenth century they had gradually established themselves as the political leaders of the province.

In the early nineteenth century, Administration encouragement of this process of spreading English methods and English ideas was taken advantage of by the Bengalis.<sup>1</sup> Government policy, combined with indigenous interest resulted in the growth of a group of local people who considered the need to adapt western views to the Indian fabric of prime importance for the progress of the country. At that time the leadership of this group of 'reformers' was primarily in the hands of the noblemen and other large landholders of the province. When circumstances necessitated the formation of a method of consultation in politics the leading figures of this group were called upon by the Government to participate.

In time this group enlarged and more or less polarised into two rival groups or parties. Each section was convinced that the other's attitude towards western ideas was harmful for India. The key word in the older group's approach was adaptation. They advocated remoulding

1. H.S. Bose: Indian Awakening in Bengal, p.152.

western institutions to suit the local background. On the other hand, these conservatives maintained, the younger elements were so keen on trying to prove that their views were similar to the British in every respect that they tended to lose sight of the local conditions.<sup>1</sup> Surendranath Banerjea and other leading personalities of the new group, who were frequently described as more English than the English, doubtless fanned their fears even further. Such an attitude, they felt, would undoubtedly erode the very foundation on which the society was based. It was leading to a systematic loss of regard for indigenous institutions which in turn was draining the vitality of the Indian society as such.<sup>2</sup> Describing them, the Maharaja of Burdwan said that they were the "extreme section of the England returned community, who look upon everything appertaining to orthodox India or orthodox Hindu as beneath their contempt and in that sense are the real enemies of the country...."<sup>3</sup> Despite the efforts of the nobles to restrict the leadership of these new elements, the latter gradually acquired strength

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1. "The educated Indian now regards himself as a full grown man, the equal in every respect of the cultured European, not to be set aside as an Asiatic, or as a member of a dark race. He claims the right of thinking his own thoughts, and he is quite prepared to burn what he has hitherto adored and to create a new heaven and a new earth". - J.C. Ker: Political Troubles in India, p.vii.
  2. Their effort to retain the caste structure free from the domination of "modern" leaders discussed in the previous chapter is a perfect example of their reaction to this fear.
  3. The Englishman: 7 Dec. 1915, p.9. - In this the Maharaja was one with the extremists who also believed that the Moderates were over westernised.

until, by the twentieth century, they became the acknowledged leaders of the urban intelligentsia. Thus we find that in the early decades of this century two groups of political leaders with divergent attitudes had emerged.

Before going any further, it is imperative to keep in mind that during the period under review, mass participation in politics was a factor that did not exist. Leadership was assessed by the Government from the standpoint of the breadth of interest represented by an individual or group as much as how far that individual or group could influence and lead the ignorant mass towards progress. The elective principle was still in its infancy, and direct representation was limited to only a handful.<sup>1</sup> Such being the case, the nobles were at an advantage as they had numerous channels described in the previous chapter by which they could make themselves heard by the general public.

The difference in attitude between the two groups did not rest only on their divergent attitude to westernisation. Another such difference existed in their attitude towards what their own position should be viz-a-viz the Government. The nobles for their part advocated sincere criticism of Government policies and programmes. It was not their aim to embarrass the Administration, but rather to correct its shortcomings. Writing about the Maharaja of Nashipur,

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1. Discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

even as radical a paper as the Amrita Bazar Patrika acknowledged that "a scion of one of the most ancient families in the land... can still serve his countrymen without the fear of frown or favour."<sup>1</sup> Reporting on the annual meeting of the Burdwan Mohammadan Association the Musalman pointed out that "unlike most of the so-called Muhammadan leaders Nawab Abdul Jabbar had the courage to speak out his mind frankly, and by the independence he showed he left a deep impression on his audience".<sup>2</sup> Writing about the Raja of Sovabazar the Bengalee stated that "the Raja Bahadur had the courage of his convictions and did not hesitate to face unpopularity, both with the Government and his own compatriots to act according to the dictates of his conscience ".<sup>3</sup>

There is clear evidence that such efforts at criticism on the part of the nobles were not resented. One of the severest critics of the Government was Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee. Although he had the unique record of being awarded the titles of raja and C.S.I. in the same year,<sup>4</sup> he remained a persistent critic. The Criminal Investigation Department had compiled a considerable file on the Maharaja of Kassimbazar. His outspoken criticism led the Department to suspect him of harbouring anti-government sympathies. But we still find Carmichael and Duke considering him one of the

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1. M.Chattopadhyay: Ranajit Mahima, p.3.

2. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 19 Dec. 1914,  
p.742.

3. The Bengalee: 6 Dec. 1912, p.2.

4. Carmichael to Hardinge, 17 March 1914, C.P.I.:  
1914, Vol.Val2, pt.I, p.205.

best landlords, and arguing with the Central Government in favour of giving him a K.C.I.E.<sup>1</sup> The Mymensingh family were well known anti-partitionists and even took to open boycott of foreign goods.<sup>2</sup> But that did not cause them to be deprived of official recognition.<sup>3</sup> During the discussion for the appointment of a new Indian member in the Secretary of State's Council it was suggested that, as the Administration was being accused of invariably appointing a 'safe' man, it would be wiser to nominate a well known critic in the future. The two names suggested were those of Bhupendranath Basu and the Maharaja of Burdwan.<sup>4</sup> Although he was considered a critic, the Maharaja was called upon for his services time and again. The Raja of Narajole, who was suspected of being involved in terrorist activities by the official circle, nevertheless was allowed to lead the deputation that received Carmichael during his tour of Midnapore, and later was accorded a private interview with the Governor.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, it seemed to the nobles and other like-minded conservatives that the leaders of the intelligentsia, instead of acting as a corrective influence, had, over the years, acquired the habit of constant opposition to the Government. At the beginning, when the Congress movement had just been initiated

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1. Ibid, p.204.

2. S.N. Banerjea, p.186.

3. Carmichael to Hardinge 19 Nov. 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol.Va8,pt.I, p.394.

4. Sec.St. to Viceroy 7 May 1917, Telegrams: Chelmsford, Vol.8, pt.I, p.110.

5. The Englishman: 18 Jan, 1913, p.4.

and its leadership was confined to apparently loyal men, the nobles gave unstinted support to its cause. But as time passed it seemed to them as though its leadership was being taken over by a more radical group of men, forcing even the loyalists to give lip service quite frequently to their doctrine. The nobles, who continued to maintain a loyalist stance, found this new approach objectionable.<sup>1</sup> In their eyes it seemed as though the new leaders' political philosophy rested on perpetual attack on Government endeavours even if they had to undergo a complete turn-about in their own previous demands. There was no denying the fact that the group which included "so learned a lawyer as Rash Behari Ghose, so fervid an orator as Surendranath Banerjea, so subtle a politician as Bhupendranath Basu, and so skillful an<sup>2</sup> organiser as Ambica Charan Majumdar" was an awe-inspiring body. But, despite their brilliance, it seemed to many that one day they would say that the Government could find crores of rupees to finance education and sanitation, and the next day take it to task for spending too much money.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan condemned their inconsistent behaviour by publicly announcing that their attitude combined "hysterical outbursts of loyalty on the one hand, and adverse criticism in the press on the other."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

2. The Englishman: 17 Feb. 1912, p.4.

3. Ibid, 26 Jan. 1911, p.4.

4. The Bengalee: 2 Apr. 1915, p.4.



Another such basic difference that the nobles believed existed between themselves and the other leaders was their respective concept of patriotism. Unlike the new leaders, who were primarily nationalists, the nobles' loyalty went way beyond the provincial, or even the national, boundary. They believed that Bengal in particular and India in general would benefit tremendously if the country acquired an equal status in an integrated, federated empire in the same manner as in the case of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland being formed into a united kingdom. Independence was not as beneficial as mutual dependence in their eyes. Their desire for the type of administration best suited for the country was clearly expressed by Nawab Shamsul Huda when he said that it was not self-government that the common Indian cared for, but good government. The majority did not much care for Home Rule, or for any political reform whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> The nobles believed that England was virtually the centre of modern civilization, enlightenment and progress.<sup>2</sup> It was due to the Empire that India was fast awakening from her dream of the past.<sup>3</sup> The Empire had rescued the country from poverty and misrule, and converted it into a centre of material and intellectual progress: "the greatest feat achieved by any nation since the downfall of the Roman Empire."<sup>4</sup> They were the citizens of a great and compact Empire, and not people

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1. The Englishman: 23 Apr. 1918, p.4. (Nashipur)

2. Ibid: 5 Sept. 1914, p.6. (Kakina)

3. Ibid: 6 June 1911, p.6. (Murshidabad)

4. Ibid: 30 March 1911, p.6. (Peary Mohan Mukerjee)

of an isolated dependency of the Crown.<sup>1</sup> They strove for the day when the individual components would all have an equal voice at the Imperial Council at London, forming the Federation of Greater Britain,<sup>2</sup> complementing one another, rather than remain superior and subordinate, or become opposing forces. What was best for the country, they claimed, was not Home Rule but equality: equal laws, equal rights and equal treatment as fellow subjects of the same sovereign.<sup>3</sup> They disagreed with the liberal Englishman who conceded to the demands of the other leaders as they felt that in the long run such a process would retard the progress of the country.<sup>4</sup> The goal should be equality and not similarity as the leaders of the intelligentsia with liberal western views were suggesting.<sup>5</sup>

That their imperial patriotism was sincere and not merely a matter of drawing official attention on themselves was well illustrated by the Maharaja of Burdwan during his tour of the European continent. While going for a boat trip at Lucerne, away from the possibilities of frown or favour from British officials, he requested that the boat's flag be changed from the American Stars and Stripes to the imperial Union Jack. His remark that

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1. Ibid: 12 Dec. 1911, p.7. (Murshidabad)
  2. The concept of Greater Britain was the product of growing liberalism in Britain's attitude towards her white settlement. The nobles extended the idea to embrace India also - A. Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism,
  3. Carmichael to Chelmsford 20 Aug, 1916 (Encls.), p.6 fn G.B.R., p.146. (Shamsul Huda)
  4. Burdwan to Curzon 14 Aug, 1907, Letters: Curzon, Vol. 426, p.69.
  5. e.g. Representative legislature should be created as in England. But - unlike England representation should be according to a sectional rather than a territorial basis, as India had too many minority interests which would otherwise not be adequately represented, leading to discontent which would end in chaos. - See Addresses presented at Cal. : Montagu, Vol. 34.

England was his fatherland while India was the ever dear motherland, clearly illustrated the feeling of a Bengali nobleman.<sup>1</sup>

The difference between the nobles and the leaders of the intelligentsia widened even further with the former's growing conviction that the latter were subtly undermining their reputation as zamindars. They felt that the ever widening belief that the nobles left their estate management to naibs, who in turn sucked the blood out of the peasants, was being spread with the tacit consent of the new leadership. But the nobles knew that these naibs came from the same group of intelligentsia whom the new leaders claimed to represent: no doubt they suspected the sincerity of these critics. In an attempt to counteract this growing belief they publicly emphasised that "it is too sweeping a remark to say that all the Officers of Zemindars are unscrupulous. Almost all the Managers and responsible officers, at least of the bigger Zemindars, are men of high education now-a-days and if persons of the same class do not prove unscrupulous while in public service, there is no reason why they should prove to be only because they happen to be in the service of the Zemindars".<sup>2</sup> Many men in their service were outstanding in their own fields. For example, Shamboo Charan

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1. B.C. Mahtab: Impressions, p.83.

2. The Bengalee: 27 Sept. 1911, p.3.

Mookerjee, editor of Rais and the Rayat, president of the India League, rose to be a minister in the Maharaja of Tripura's service.<sup>1</sup> Sarada Charan Mookerjee, the Superintendent of the Nawab of Dacca, was a prominent member of the so-called middle-class educated community.<sup>2</sup> K.B.Dutt, the legal adviser of Burdwan Estate, was a well known Barrister-at-law.<sup>3</sup> Amalananda Bose, the Superintendent of Kassimbazar Estate, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland for his historical researches.<sup>4</sup> Even Surendranath Banerjea, the leading light of the new element, had once been offered a managerial post by the Maharaja of Tripura.<sup>5</sup> Being aware of the calibre of men in their staff, the nobles rather resented the insinuation that they appointed inconsiderable men. Maharaja Tagore voiced the zamindars' resentment of these "people who never miss an occasion to run down the zamindar" during the Great War Conference.<sup>6</sup>

Their exasperation at being thought that they were callous of the well-being of the people in their care, can be assessed from a letter that Maharaja Tagore published in the Englishman. In it he wrote, "I should like to know how many philanthropic, patriotic, educational and industrial movements of the present day would have survived, had it not been for the Maharajadhiraj

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1. B.B. Majumdar, p.140.

2. The Englishman: 19 March 1911, p.8.

3. Macpherson to Chief Sec.Beng, 9 Aug, 1910,  
B.A.P.: Feb. 1911, Vol.8679, p.46.

4. The Englishman: 10 June 1915, p.6.

5. S.N. Banerjea, p.125.

6. The Englishman: 4 June, 1918, p.6.

Bahadur of Burdwan, the Maharaja of Cossimbazar, and let me add, the Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga? In intellectual eminence and experience of public affairs, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee, C.S.I., and Raja Kishori Lall Goswami would take the front rank in any assemblage of their countrymen".<sup>1</sup> Gradually the nobles were more and more convinced that many amongst the new leadership were not only opposed habitually to the British, but **were** also systematically undermining the reputation of the nobles by misrepresenting them to the public as the "pampered vampires of the Empire".<sup>2</sup>

Their doubt about the new leaders' motives became even greater with the progress of the anti-partition movement.<sup>3</sup> The Muslim nobles could not remain unaffected by the fact that the revocation of partition, which the new group demanded, would cost their communal followers the chance of catching up with the primarily Hindu-dominated intelligentsia of the province. In the eyes of the nawabs it seemed that the 'nationalists', who claimed that the needs of the poor and the downtrodden were represented by them, denied to the Muslims, who were undoubtedly the more backward, the chance to rise out of the quagmire. The Nawab of Dacca put into words the opinion of the nawabs and their associates at such a contrary attitude when he warned his followers

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1. Ibid: 22 Nov. 1917, p.4.

2. Ibid: 22 July, 1911, p.3

3. Discussed in fuller detail in Chapter V.

that the Hindu-dominated intelligentsia was the primary enemy of Muslim interest.<sup>1</sup> According to the nawabs the climax was reached when the Calcutta leadership, which claimed to be the champions of universal education, turned against the proposal for Dacca University on the ground that they would have no control over it, and that it was communal in character. Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury came forward to oppose what he considered was an agitation based on hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup> Such apparently contradictory stands on the part of the Calcutta leadership gave further stimulus to their doubts of the new group's sincerity. From their point of view it looked as though the so-called nationalists methodically reacted against the groups - landholders, Muslims, caste bodies, etc. - over which the nobles had the greatest influence.<sup>3</sup>

The differences of attitude that had taken shape over the decades had become vast and unmistakable by the twentieth century. Thus the original group of 'reformers' had undoubtedly diverted into two distinctly different courses, and had emerged as rival groups in Bengal. The question that follows is whether the nobles had the potential to be acknowledged as an effective rival political group. We are already aware that political activities were carried out via political associations which acted both as pressure groups and sounding boards for public opinion. In other words, the associations

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1. Discussed further in Chapter V.

2. Ibid.

3. The same tendency was apparent in 1912 when, in contradiction to their previous stand that there should be no special representation in the Legislative Council, they opined that the member representing the Indian commercial interest should be chosen from the Indian Association in their control rather than the National Chamber dominated by the Law Society. - Discussed further on in Chapter IV.

acted as intermediaries in public affairs. To analyse the effectiveness, if any, of the nobles in the political life of the province, it is necessary to examine the development, the aims and objects. and the membership of the major associations of the time.

Numerous associations had been formed to represent different group interests over the last century. By the turn of the century they had gained tremendous importance in the political life of Bengal. Though there were many officially recognised associations which the Government consulted,<sup>1</sup> all of them were not consulted at the same time. Each association was considered well-versed on particular subjects, and when such matters arose, those particular bodies were asked to opine. But there were six such associations which were called upon practically every time any advice was required. Doubtless it was so because they could influence the largest number of people and affect the most important sections of the community. They were the British Indian Association, the Bengal Landholders Association, the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, the Bengal Presidency Moslem League, the Central National Muhammadan Association of Calcutta, and the Indian Association.

The oldest of the six was the British Indian Association. The introduction of European ideas was the primary factor which led to the formation of the

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1. Amongst others there were 14 associations recognised by the Govt. in Calcutta, 4 in the Presidency Division and 10 in the Burdwan Division. - 'List of Associations', B.P.P.: Sept. 1911, Vol.8683, pp.43-48.

Association. The 'reformers' felt the need to play an effective part in public affairs.<sup>1</sup> The culmination of this desire was the formation of the National Association in 1851 at a meeting held in the Paikpara Rajbari. Most of the members of the well known zamindari families of Bengal attended the meeting. Within a month and a half of its inauguration, a bigger and more representative body, the British Indian Association, presided over by Raja Radhakanto Deb of Sovabazar as president, with Raja Kali Krishna Deb as vice president, Debendranath Tagore as Secretary and Raja Digambar Mitra as assistant secretary, came into existence. It was to act for some time as the leader of what was then acknowledged as Indian public opinion.<sup>2</sup>

The object of the Association was to promote the improvement and efficiency of the British Indian Government by every legitimate means in its power and thereby to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India in order to ameliorate the condition of the native inhabitants of the subject territory.<sup>3</sup> At the inaugural meeting it resolved to try and "remove the existing defects in the laws and the civil administration of the country and to promote the general welfare and interest of its people."<sup>4</sup>

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1. B.B. Majumdar, p.33.

2. B.I.A.: pp.4,5.

3. The Friends of India: 27 Nov. 1851, Vol,17,  
p.755.

4. Sujata Ghose: 'British Indian Association',  
Report of the Regional Records Survey Committee  
for West Bengal, p.20.



The leadership of the Association was retained by the nobles even later. While the last century was coming to its close, the dominating figures in the Association were Raja Rajendra Mitter, Maharaja Narendra Krishna, along with Babu Kristo Das Pal who declined a rajaship on the ground that he was too poor for such an honour.<sup>1</sup> The turn of the century found Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore the leading personality in the society. With his death his adopted son and successor, Maharaja Prodyot Coomar Tagore, followed by the Maharaja of Burdwan along with Raja Reshee Case Law as the secretary, dominated the proceedings. The vice presidents were the Maharajas of Kassimbazar and Susang, and Raja Peary Mohan Mookerjee.<sup>2</sup>

At the outset the Maharaja of Burdwan was reluctant to seek membership. He felt that it had become "too full of that barrister and doctor element" who, according to him, were "the real discontented mischief making element in India". But then he changed his mind. He felt that since the death of the late Maharaja Tagore things were going badly for the Association.<sup>3</sup> Presumably he joined their ranks to guide them back to the path he considered politically healthy and socially useful. From his survey of the

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1. B.B. Majundar, p.73.

2. The Englishman: 1 Apr. 1912, p.12.

3. Burdwan to Curzon 6 Aug. 1908, Letters: Curzon, Vol. 426, p. 77.

Bengal scene we find that he was disturbed by the possibility of "some Rajas and Maharajas of Bengal ... being led by the collar" by discontented people.<sup>1</sup> This was quite possible, he asserted, as some of the nobles liked "sitting on the fence".<sup>2</sup> His intentions were to regenerate a conservative attitude, and make it more representative by limiting the influence of the intelligentsia.<sup>3</sup>

For most of the decade under study, the Maharaja presided over the Association. It coincided with the time when it became progressively difficult to retain popular support without at least giving lip service to radical policies. Simultaneously, it was obviously not possible to retain the Government's confidence if radical views were voiced. Under the circumstances it was very difficult to be effective as an intermediary. The Maharaja's aim, to judge from his presidential speeches at the annual general meetings, seem to have been to retain the public leadership without breaking out of conservative bounds.<sup>4</sup> By 1914 he seemed satisfied with the first half of his programme. Speaking from the chair he stated that he was proud to say that the Association "acted as a board giving advice to the Government on any particular measure on which the Government chose to consult it".<sup>5</sup> Two years later he took a

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1.B.C.Mahtab: Studies, p.66

2.Burdwan to Curzon 6 Jan.1909,Letters:Curzon, Vol.426,p.81

3.Burdwan to Curzon 6 Aug.1908, Ibid, p.78

4.See the Englishman and the Bengalee 1911-19

5.The Englishman:31 March 1914, p.8

bolder stand, and made an attempt to push the Association into a more positive stance. Doubtless his intentions were to recapture the attention of the public which had begun to doubt the Association's vitality. He stated, "I cannot help feeling that at the present the British Indian Association is much behind the times, and that whilst it is our duty to give our matured opinions on pending legislations and other important Government proposals, it is equally our duty to find out the under current of all modern movements which are rolling the ball of national development in India .. .. We must show our activities and interests in all legitimate aspirations which have for their object the real and true welfare or the advancement of India, whether they be political, social or otherwise".<sup>1</sup>

The Association's prestige was based on the fact that its leaders and members were considered the "natural" leaders of rural Bengal. Through them the governor could easily learn of the needs of the mufassil.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the socio-economic channels available to them could be effectively utilised in educating public opinion.

Like the British Indian Association, the Bengal Landholders Association owed its origin to several prominent zamindars of Bengal. But unlike the British Indian Association it was an institution representing

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1. Ibid: 1 Apr. 1916, p.7.

2. Ibid: 19 March, 1917, p.9.

the interests of the landed class alone. As the leadership and the membership of the two resembled each other so much there were many like Hardinge who could not see the point of having two institutions representing the same interests. The differences could be traced to the fact that, contrary to popular belief, the British Indian Association was not in reality a society of landholders exclusively. It was professing to be an organisation of all classes of people, and remained so till the end.<sup>1</sup> The only way it differed from the other political associations was that it charged high annual fees and was therefore an association of the affluent. It was doubtless the result of the belief that to retain prestige it was necessary to be remote and exclusive: a byproduct of the attitude of the nobles.

The Bengal Landholders Association, on the other hand, was exclusively for the zamindars. The majority of the superior landholders lived in the mufassil, and they wished to found an association in Calcutta where they could meet periodically, and discuss the problems related to their own class interests. The zamindars were being accused by a very vocal section of the public of being parasitical and oppressive, and the permanent settlement was under attack from various quarters. It was considered necessary

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1. B.B. Majumdar, p.36.

by the prominent landholders to induce their juniors to take a more active interest in their zamandaris, and appreciate the current mood of the people or face dangerous consequences. With this in view the nobles and other superior landlords took a lead in forming the Bengal Landholders Association and its subsidiary bodies.

The Association was inaugurated in 1911 under the presidency of Maharaja Surja Kanta Acharjya of Muktagacha, the secretary being the Maharaja of Natore. The majority of the Hindu and Moslem landholders of Bengal were its members. Other than the two nobles mentioned above, the prominent members of the society were the Nawab of Dacca, Nawabs Hossain Haidar, Shamsul Huda, Syed Moazzin Hossain, and the Maharajas of Kassimbazar and Dighapatia. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar succeeded the Maharaja of Muktagacha as president with the Maharaja of Dighapatia as vice-president and Nawab Shamsul Huda as secretary. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar in his turn was succeeded by the Maharaja of Dighapatia with Nawab Ali Chaudhury as one of the joint secretaries.

Presiding over the annual general meeting in 1911, the Maharaja of Kassimbazar pointed out the basic aim of the Association when he stated that "the Association is not a mere name, but is meant to be an institution with a well defined sphere of work, which the landholders alone can duly perform.

There were various works of public utility which fall within the special province of the Landholders to initiate, organise and develop." <sup>1</sup> Another fundamental aim being the linking of the outlying areas with Calcutta, it took considerable pains to advocate the necessity of creating an inexpensive and effectual system of communication between Calcutta and the suburbs.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it also aimed to create a fellow feeling between the intelligentsia, the tenants and the zamindars. With that in view the Association organised periodical social gatherings in an attempt to promote better understanding between themselves and the other sections of the community considered important at the time. <sup>3</sup>

Its approach to and treatment of issues ran on parallel lines to the British India Association. That is not surprising since the leadership was vested with the same status group. There had even been an instant when the Association made overtures to amalgamate with the older organisation.<sup>4</sup>

— Presumably it later decided against such a move because the landholders felt the need to have an association representing their personal interests exclusively.

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1. The Englishman: 1 July 1911, p.3

2. Ibid: 23 Jan. 1911, p.4

3. Ibid: 1 Jan. 1912, p.2

4. Ibid.

The importance of the Association rested on the same principle as the British Indian Association: their connection with rural Bengal. In a country where the cultivator had not yet received an education which would make him competent to express opinions on public questions the Administration necessarily had to rely on landlords and tenure holders for advice on rural matters.<sup>1</sup>

Although Bengal, like the rest of India, was predominantly agricultural, commerce also played an important role in its economic life. In this sphere also some senior noblemen were at the very forefront. The political supremacy of the British favoured the exercise of economic power by European residents who derived special advantages from linguistic and racial identification with the rulers. They established organisations and institutions for building up their advantages and protecting them against intruders all over India. They were organised in chambers of commerce to which very few Indians were admitted. The Bengal, Madras and Upper India Chambers of Commerce had practically no Indian members before the first world war. Thus in most commercial fields the European businessmen were well organised to maintain something approaching collective monopoly.<sup>2</sup> The formation of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce by the Law family and its associates was an attempt to organise the important Indian merchants into a unified body to advocate the needs of the Indian commercial community and work parallel to the Bengal Chamber

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1 Ibid: 19 March 1917, p.9.

2. A.K. Bagchi: 'Entrepreneurship in India', Elites in South Asia: ed. Leach & Mukerjee, pp.224,229.

of Commerce.

The National Chamber was formed in 1887. Its object was to protect the industrial, commercial and general political interest of the Indian commercial community. It challenged the monopoly of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce by gaining the Government's recognition and acquiring the privilege of returning a member to the Calcutta Port Trust. By the second decade of the century it was represented on all the important boards of the province throughout the period under review. The Chamber was presided over by Raja Reshee Case Law,<sup>1</sup> and claimed to be the true spokesman of Indian interests in trade and commerce. It consisted of nearly all the principal rice, jute and coal merchants, the owners of jute and cotton presses, and a large number of joint stock companies. Apart from Raja Reshee Case Law, the other prominent noblemen who were members of the Chamber were the Maharaja of Kassimbazar, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee, Raja Shew Bux Bogla and Nawab Sujatali Beg.<sup>2</sup> But the most effective members were the Laws of Uttarpara. They dominated the proceedings to the extent that the Indian Association maintained that the "Bengal National Chamber of Commerce is a one family show".<sup>3</sup>

In 1912 Raja Reshee Case Law wrote to the Bengal Government, "I hope you will be pleased not to put our

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1. The Englishman: 1 Jan. 1912, p.10.

2. Hon.Sec. to Chief Sec.Beng. 24 March 1912, B.A.P., Aug. 1913, Vol.9133, p.177.

3. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power', J.A.S., Feb. 1962, p.170.



Chamber in the same category with the associations of shopkeepers, petty dealers and other people whose ways are not our ways and whose ideas are not our ideas, otherwise it will lower us in public estimate".<sup>1</sup> Apparently the domination of the Law family and the presence of other fellow nobles caused the Chamber to acquire an exclusive and arrogant character in keeping with the behavioural pattern of the nobles in Bengal. Remoteness and depersonalised influence were being advocated as the prime necessity to maintain public esteem.

Along with rural and commercial issues the Muslim problem in Bengal was also of primary importance. It was considered a separate and special issue leading to its independent treatment by the Government.<sup>2</sup> The leadership of Muslim political interests and social advancement was vested in the Bengal Presidency Moslem League, the provincial branch of the all-India body, and the Central National Muhammadan Association of Calcutta.

The objects of the two Associations ran practically parallel to one another. The aim of the Moslem League was to protect and advance the political, educational, commercial and other interests of Muslims in Bengal. The Muhammadan Association varied from the former to the extent that it was founded for the purpose of looking after not only the political but the general

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1. Ibid.

2. Carmichael to Crewe 27 July 1912, Letters Carmichael:  
Crewe, Box 6/6.

advancement of the Muslim community at large and the Muslims of Bengal in particular.<sup>1</sup> Deriving its inspiration from the traditions of the past, it proposed to work in harmony with western culture and the progressive tendencies of the age, so Nawab Abdul Jabbar told Chelmsford.<sup>2</sup> Thus once more we find the approach being one of remoulding and the adaptation of "western culture and the progressive tendencies of the age" without losing sight of the "tradition of the past".

During the period under review, the most prominent personalities in the Moslem League were the Nawab of Dacca, and Nawabs Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury, Shamshul Huda and Serajul Islam, while the dominant members of the Muhammadan Association were Nawabs Abdur Rahman, Abdul Jabbar and Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury. After the death of the Nawab of Dacca the Moslem League came close to losing its identity to the Indian National Congress, and temporarily the nobles lost control of it. But such was not the case with the Muhammadan Association.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from five of the six major associations, the influence of the nobles penetrated many of the minor ones also. The Bengal Mahajan Sabha, a significant body in the commercial life of Bengal, had the Maharaja of Kassimbazar as its president.<sup>4</sup> The Burdwan Mohamadan Association,

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1. 'List of Associations', B.P.F. Sept. 1911, Vol.8683, p.47.

2. Speeches by Chelmsford, Vol.I, p.174.

3. Discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

4. Hon.Sec. to Chief Sec.Beng. 4 June 1912, B.A.P. Aug. 1913, Vol.9133, p.181.

which was the chief organisation through which the Muslims of the District worked out their social, religious and political matters, was presided over by Nawab Abdul Jabbar.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Susang was on the Chair of the Mymensingh Sammilani.<sup>2</sup> The President of the North Bengal Zamindars Association was the Raja of Kakina.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar was the president of the Murshidabad Association at Berhampore.<sup>4</sup>

The only association out of the major six which was not influenced by the nobles in any effective sense was the Indian Association. This association was founded by Surendranath Banerjea and his associates. It was primarily the product of frustration caused in the ranks of the urban intelligentsia by the overbearing domination of the political and social life of Bengal by alien rulers and indigenous noblemen.

It has been suggested that, in spite of its promises, there was plainly visible a growing reluctance on the part of the British Government to admit Indians in large numbers to the service. This attitude created a great sense of resentment in the mind of the intelligentsia. They were convinced that there was no truth in the British argument that they were still not competent enough to handle the work, as they considered themselves to be as capable as the British in every respect. Soon

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1. The Bengalee: 9 Dec. 1914, p.4.

2. Ibid: 3 March, 1912, p.3.

3. The Englishman: 15 Dec. 1915, p.4.

4. 'List of Associations', B.P.P. Sept. 1911, Vol.8683, p.46

incidents occurred which changed this passive discontent into an active agitation. After a short period of service Surendranath Banerjea was struck off the list of civilians. It resulted in his taking to public life, and founding the Indian Association. In his memoirs he states, "After my return from England ... I began seriously to consider the advisability of forming an Association to represent the views of the educated middle-class community and inspire them with a living interest in public affairs".<sup>1</sup> Thus the Indian Association came into existence which "was to be the centre of an All-India movement" based on "the conception of a United India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini".<sup>2</sup> In time the Association became a subsidiary body of the Indian National Congress. After 1886, the Indian Association confined its activities mainly to matters connected with Bengal, leaving the national programme to the Congress.<sup>3</sup> Hence a political association came into being which aimed to prove that Indians were as capable as the British in all respects and which drew its inspiration from its programme of united India from a western source. A programme so un-Indian doubtless caused discomfort in the minds of the traditional leaders, since it was in total contrast to the policy of modification of western ideas that they had preached and practised for such a length of

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1. S.N. Banerjea, p.40.

2. Majumdar, Ray Chaudhuri, Dutta: Advanced History of India, p.889.

3. B.B. Majumdar, pp.141,157.

time. It is in contrast to the demands and activities of this Association that the others have been condemned as unpatriotic and reactionary. Nevertheless the nobles were the founder members of numerous political associations and could be found in key positions even in the twentieth century. Indeed they were the one group which could be considered as truly inter-organisational political leaders in Bengal. Moreover, the aims of the various associations, as expressed in their speeches, were similar. They all sought to influence the Administration so that it would look at Indian needs and interests with greater understanding.

As all the six associations apparently had the same aim, it is necessary to see how far they were permitted by the Government to influence its decisions as intermediaries in public affairs. The Government sought the Indian Association's advice on matters connected with proposed legislation on municipal questions and on matters of general interest to the educated community in particular, and on matters of public interest in general. Both the Muslim associations were consulted on the political, educational, commercial and other interests of Muslims in particular and in matters of public interest in general. The Government consulted the National Chamber in connection with the interests of industry, trade and commerce in

particular and all matters of public interest in general. The British Indian Association was consulted on questions relating to the protection of the interests of the landholders in particular and on matters of public interest in general.<sup>1</sup> The Bengal Landholders' Association was also consulted about land questions and other major legislation in the province.<sup>2</sup> The Indian Association, dominated by the leaders of the intelligentsia, was consulted on legislation, on municipal questions, and on matters concerning the educated community. On the other hand, the associations dominated by the nobles, if taken together, covered a wider area. They were expected to advise on political, educational and commercial matters, and other matters of interest to the Muslim community, on questions connected with industry, trade and commerce, and on issues affecting land and landholding. As to whether they actually did affect the Government decisions, more later.

The domination of the nobles over these political organisations is visible in the deputations that visited Government House to mark such occasions as the arrival of new governors or the reception of senior dignitaries. It is significant that the deputations that called at Government House to welcome Carmichael as the new Governor comprised the Maharaja of Burdwan, Nawab Serajul Islam, Raja Reshee Case Law, the Maharaja

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1. 'List of Associations', B.P.P. Sept, 1911, Vol. 8683, pp. 43-48.
  2. e.g. 1917-18: Bengal Tenancy Amendment Bill, Burra Bazar Improvement Scheme, Additional Powers to Courts, Criminal Procedure Code, Calcutta University Commission. - The Englishman: 9 Apr. 1918, p. 3.

of Kassimbazar, and Rash Behari Ghose representing the British Indian Association, the Bengal Presidency Moslem League, the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, the Bengal Landholders' Association, and the Indian Association respectively.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, when a combined effort of the associations was called for, even the Indian Association accepted a nobleman as the spokesman of the deputation. To insist on one of their own group being selected as the spokesman would most probably be outvoted by the others. Doubtless this was so because unlike the nobles the leaders of the intelligentsia were unable to claim inter-organisational leadership. An example of such a joint deputation was during the reception organised for Hardinge. It comprised the British Indian Association, the Indian Association, the Bengal Presidency Moslem League, the Imperial League, the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, the Marwari Association and the Bengal Landholders Association. The joint address was presented on behalf of all parties concerned by the Maharaja of Burdwan.<sup>2</sup> He was the president of the British Indian Association, a founder member and president of the Imperial League, a prominent member of the National Chamber of Commerce, and the biggest landholder in the province. Thus he was in a position directly to represent four of the seven associations forming the deputation.

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1. The Englishman: 5 Apr. 1912, p.5.

2. The Bengalee: 27 Dec. 1913, p.2.

The points that still remain obscure are whether the associations dominated by the nobles concentrated merely on issues affecting the vested interests of the landholders, and whether they actually influenced the Government in its decision making. The association most criticised as an ineffective club of landholders was the British India Association. Both modern and contemporary authorities have suggested that the Association's leadership was rejected by the people of Bengal because it refused to take the initiative ever since the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Surendranath Banerjea stated that, "it was essentially by its creed an Association of landholders".<sup>2</sup> During the debate on the Calcutta Improvement Bill, 1911, M.N. Das provoked the Maharaja of Burdwan to refute the insinuation that it was an exclusive club of the zamindars since the "association was composed entirely of landholders". The Maharaja explained that "the British Indian Association, as at present constituted, is certainly not purely a landholders' association.... In the present, while representing the interests of the landholders, it has not failed in its duty to bring before the public matters of importance, which not only have affected the landholders, but the general public...."<sup>3</sup> A selective examination of the opinions forwarded by the Association during the period under review reveals the wide variety of

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1. A.Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism, pp.209-210.

2. S.N. Banerjea, p.40.

3. 'Calcutta Improvement Bill 1911', B.L.P. : 1911, Vol.8685, App.E, p.21.



subjects that the body advised upon, and which were accepted by the Government corroborating the Maharaja's claim.

In 1911-12, the Government brought forward a Bill to amend the Indian Post Office Act. The British Indian Association strongly protested against the proposed abolition of the maximum rates for parcel post on the score that they were unremunerative and also complained against the proposed fees to be charged for enquiries into complaints regarding the disposal of postal articles. The Government took their first advice and redrafted the second clause to mean that payment was to be made only if an enquiry was demanded as to the delivery of value payable articles.

To reduce the pressure of work upon the provincial High Court, the Government proposed that there should either be no appeal from the judgement of a single judge in a civil case passed in revision, or in exercise of the Court's general power of superintendence over subordinate courts, or that there should be no right of appeal from the decision of a single judge sitting in appeal unless the subject matter in dispute exceeded a specified sum. The Association felt that the right to appeal, with which the Government proposed to interfere, was highly valued by the people, and advised the Government to drop the proposal. The advice was accepted.

With a view to passing Life Insurance Laws

on the lines of those prevailing in Britain, the Government introduced a Bill in 1912-13, for the proper control and growth of insurance companies in India. The Association generally approved, but felt that there should be some provision requiring the investment of all life insurance funds in approved securities. Apparently the advice was accepted, as that very year a Bill to regulate Provident Insurance Societies was introduced.

The Bill introduced in September 1913, to amend the Penal Code so as to give protection to young girls was supported by the Association. It approved that the age of discretion for girls had been raised to sixteen from fourteen. When, however, next year the Government proposed in an amendment to afford greater protection to minor girls by separating them from their mothers or near relatives leading immoral lives, the Association pointed out the futility of any such reform until proper rescue homes could be provided. The latter portion was shelved.

In the same year the Association accorded approval to the project of building the Grand Chord Canal between Calcutta and Eastern Bengal, after consulting the merchants of Ultadanga, Beliaghata and other such places principally to be affected. But it objected in 1917 to a more elaborate scheme for a Grand Trunk Canal for inland steamers and boats between Calcutta and Eastern Bengal. It feared that the scheme would

deprive Calcutta of a lot of trade and diminish its commercial importance. The project was dropped.

The British Indian Association gave strong support to the continuance of hackney carriage transport in Calcutta. The Bill to amend the Calcutta Hackney Carriage Act was introduced in 1916. In deference to public opinion and the disapproval expressed by the Association the Bill was withdrawn. Consequently, the Select Committee recommended that a new Bill be framed. The decision was primarily brought about because the Association apprehended that the changes proposed in the original Bill were of a drastic character, and suggested certain alterations to remedy the faults, which the Select Committee accepted.

The War caused the prices of foodstuffs and cloth to rise to unprecedented heights. A Conference comprising the Association and other invited associations was held in 1919 in the rooms of the British Indian Association. The Conference adopted a resolution urging a reduction of rice exports from Bengal, importation of rice from Burma, and its sale at reduced prices at convenient centres in the mufassil through local agents, establishment of cooperative societies, reduction of freight rate, prevention of profiteering, and appointment of a food and civil supplies advisory committee. Most of the recommendations were accepted and acted upon.<sup>1</sup>

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1. B.I.A., pp.186,190, 194,196,245,251,255,259.

In short, the advice given by the Association covered a vast area of governmental activity, affecting the life of the people of the province. It was not confined to questions affecting the landed class. Moreover, most of its suggestions were acted upon by the Government and the original drafts were modified in keeping with its advice.

Thus it appears that the difference between the nobles and the other leaders was not that the latter were more active in the political life of the province than the former, nor that the leaders of the intelligentsia represented wider interest groups than the nobles, nor that the nobles refrained from being the Government's critics, but in the approach and attitude to various problems which virtually divided them into two divergent political groups. It could also be argued that the nobles, both as an inter-organisational leaders, and as "natural" leaders of rural Bengal, were better placed to act as political intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. Under the circumstances, it was inevitable that they would be called upon by the Administration, both as individual leaders of political associations, and as a group, to act as Indian intermediaries in public affairs.

A detailed study of their efforts as intermediaries reveals that they were rather effective during the decade under review. Often their advice

was attended to, and support appreciated. For certain issues they acted in a group, while for others, as individual leaders of specific political associations representing various groups' interests. As a body they were well suited for purposes such as making arrangements for ceremonials, issues pertaining to landholdings, mobilization of public opinion for war efforts, and providing conservative opinions on constitutional reforms. As individuals they were able to represent specific political associations. Over and above the fact that a nobleman was able to represent a particular political association, he had the added advantage of having territorial, socio-economic, and inter-organisational influence. Raja Reshee Case Law was a perfect example of such a person. His influence and experience in the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce made him a prime candidate whenever the Government required an Indian representative for issues pertaining to trade and commerce. Moreover, being the secretary of the British Indian Association, a senior zamindar and an important dalpati his influence covered a much wider area than merely the Indian commercial community. Regarding Muslim questions, the triumverate comprising the Nawab of Dacca, and Nawabs Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury and Shamsul Huda was a formidable combination to rely on. Even Surendranth Banerjea, the Nawab of Dacca's constant opponent, was forced to make an acknowledgment of the fact that

"as a politician he was narrow, but shrewd, with a fund of common sense that made him a tower of strength to his supporters and to the Government".<sup>1</sup> For controversial issues which could upset the educated Bengalis as well as the European residents, requiring a person capable of exerting balanced influence over both sections of the community, the Maharaja of Burdwan seems to have been relied on. Being a conservative loyalist, the premier zamindar, an important dalpati, a well known patron of education and intellectual societies, and the chairman of the British Indian Association, made him well suited for the delicate tasks.

The nobles' role as intermediaries in public affairs generated a specific attitude which underlined all their efforts as such during the decade. They prided themselves on being the bridge, as advisors and interpreters, between the rulers and the ruled, and between the different sections and interests in the community. Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee's comment in a public meeting illustrates this attitude well: "I take my stand here before you as a representative of the past, eager to clasp the hands of the representatives of the present, in the interests of the representatives of the future".<sup>2</sup> Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury's remark in a mammoth meeting organised by the Muslim community

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1. S.N. Banerjee, p.285.

2. The Bengalee: 29 July 1913, p.2.

to demonstrate what was considered an outrage to a mosque at Kanpur illustrated the above even more lucidly. He stated: "I am not one of those who would rush into the arena of political agitation for the sake of notoriety, or would consent to publicly criticise the action of the authorities unless I am sincerely and deeply convinced that such criticism is imperatively necessary in the interest of the administration itself." Then he went on to say that he was there "in order that I may discharge my duty to the community to which I have the honour to belong and also the Government ... by interpreting to the authorities the true feelings of the Mahomedan community in these matters",<sup>1</sup>

The first occasion that the nobles were called upon as a group to act as intermediaries was during the royal reception. The turn of the decade was marked by the visit to Calcutta of the King. After the darbar at Delhi he was to proceed to Calcutta. The royal visit was not a mere social function but was, to a large extent, motivated by political considerations. It was a calculated move to stabilise the political conditions prevalent in the country. The Imperial Government hoped that a darbar in India, followed by an Imperial visit to Bengal, would persuade a large section of the community to identify themselves more with the

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1. The Englishman : 4 Aug. 1913, p.6

Sovereign and regenerate a sense of loyalty to the throne which had been badly shaken by the partition of Bengal in 1905.

It was essential to carry out the programme with a great deal of diplomatic efficiency. An untoward incident could not only jeopardise the political move but also tarnish the Imperial image beyond repair. Those who supervised the occasion needed to have expert knowledge of ceremonial procedure. The nobles, bred in an atmosphere permeated with ceremonial, were the obvious choice. Regarding the Maharaja of Burdwan, Carmichael at a later date opined that on any ceremonial occasions his assistance was extremely valuable.<sup>1</sup> That they would take care that no untoward situations arose was also beyond any doubt. Thus the British Indian Association was heavily relied upon to formulate the programme for the occasion. Most of the functions connected with the royal reception were entrusted to committees and sub-committees comprising and presided over by noblemen. Even the seating arrangements, which could so easily lead to embarrassments in a multi-communal society saturated with social taboos and including pardanashin ladies, were handed over to the Maharaja of Burdwan and Maharaja Tagore.<sup>2</sup> Only in the insignificant school entertainment sub-committee were people like Gurudas Banerjee and D.P. Sarvadhikari allocated the presiding offices.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Carmichael to Chamberlain 28 June 1916,  
Governors Letters: 1915-17, p.181

2. The Englishman: 22 Nov. 1911, p.2

3. Ibid: 22 July, 1911, pp.5,6.



With the transfer of the capital to Delhi after the darbar, the Government proposed modification in the internal structure of the administration. It was proposed to abolish the Board of Revenue from 1912, and transfer its powers to the Executive Council along with the seven divisional commissioners of the province. According to the Indian-owned press, the proposed act was an excellent move. At a time when retrenchment was being demanded in all branches of the administration, the abolition of the Board would effect enormous financial savings, maintained the journalists.<sup>1</sup> But the act would primarily affect the zamindars of the province, and they were not happy with the proposal. To make their disapproval appreciated it was necessary to mobilise their opposition collectively. With that in mind, the Maharaja of Burdwan, speaking from the chair of the British Indian Association, called on his fellow zamindars to raise concerted protest.<sup>2</sup> The result was a memorial to the Government that such a move would cause the greatest inconvenience to the public in general and to the landholding class in particular. Their cases would be dealt with at a "semi-amateur" level, instead of being handled by able and experienced officers as before. The permitted appeal to the Executive Council would be a mere formality due to the fact that, by convention counsel could not appear before it.

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1. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 8 June 1912, p.348.

2. The Englishman: 21 March 1911, p.3

Moreover, the High Court would lose its power to pass injunctions on the decisions, as the Governor-in-Council was exempted from its jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> The memorial, forwarded by the British Indian Association, was signed by 156 eminent zamindars of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.<sup>2</sup>

The objections put forward by the memorialists carried considerable weight since they were drafted by the group which was considered not only well versed in land laws but also thoroughly acquainted with the intricacies of revenue administration. The matter was forwarded to the Legal Remembrancer and the Advocate-General, for further clarification and necessary adjustments.<sup>3</sup> The Legal Remembrancer, supported by the Advocate General, suggested that the title of the Board of Revenue should be retained but that the Board should consist of the members of the Governor's Council excluding the Governor himself. Moreover, the Members should remain susceptible to injunctions from the High Court in their corporate capacity as the Board of Revenue.<sup>4</sup> To make doubly sure, a committee was appointed to examine the question, and this met on the 27 July 1911. The Indian members of the committee were the Maharaja of Burdwan, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee, a lawyer recommended by the British Indian

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1. Sec. 45 of Specific Relief Act of 1877.

2. 'Memorial of B.I.A. 26 Apr. 1911. R. & S.D.P., 1912, Vol.719, Lt.nos.12-13, pp.1-4.

3. Sec.Beng. to Sec.Rev. & Agri.Ind. 14 Nov. 1911, Ibid: 1912, Vol.719, Lt. no.3157, p.2.

4. L.R. to Sec.Rev.Beng. 30 June 1911, B.R.P.: Feb. 1912, Vol.8939, p. 3.

Association, and a minor zamindar.<sup>1</sup>

The Act was modified and redrafted, with the error that the Government was on the verge of making remedied. In its final stage, the Bengal Government recommended that the Board comprise two members of the Executive Council, and be subject to injunction from the High Court.<sup>2</sup> The matter was forwarded to the Secretary of State for final sanction. After careful consideration the Secretary of State accepted the opinion of the memorialists, and decided that even the modified version would not counterbalance the harm that abolition might cause, and rejected the proposed legislation. His decision was in favour of the retention of the Board as a separate unit.<sup>3</sup>

The Imperial declaration announcing the change of capital did not signify that the commercial centre of India had also shifted. The bulk of trade and commerce continued to flow through the port of Calcutta. The port had developed without any systematic planning and had become cumbersome and unwieldy by the twentieth century. Its inadequacy for the rapidly increasing demands of trade had been engaging the attention of the Government and the Port Commissions for some time past.<sup>4</sup> In 1913 the Administration decided to look into the problem. A conference of non-officials, railway experts, port and municipal authorities, was summoned on 8 August 1913 to consider the appointment of a

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1. Resolution 1976 17 July 1911, Ibid, p.9.

2. Minutes Paper 10171-I.343.2000.2/1911; R & S.D.P.:1912, Vol.719, File 639.

3. (Telegram) Sec.St. to Viceroy 7 July 1912, B.R.P.: Aug.1912, Vol.8939, p.120.

4. Report Port Facilities Com', R & S.D.P.: Vol.758, File 3772, p.1.

Government Commission to investigate the question of development of the port and transport facilities feeding it. The problem involved both the economics of the internal Government and questions effecting imperial trade.

The only Indian invited to the conference was Raja Reshee Case Law. The conference was about to decide that a committee comprising the president of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, another representative of the Chamber, a railway expert, and an officer expert in port affairs, was to be recommended when the Raja reminded them that there had been no mention of an Indian member to represent Indian interests, and emphasised that considerable Indian interests were involved in the matter.<sup>1</sup> The subject covered such a wide range and the individual projects required such enormous expenditure<sup>2</sup> that it was imperative to select the committee with care. Four months elapsed before the Government released the names of the members of the enquiry committee. Raja Reshee Case Law was the only Indian in a committee of seven.<sup>3</sup>

Amongst the many issues discussed was a proposal to discontinue bookings from the Eastern Bengal State Railway to the section of the Port Commissioner's line to the immediate south of Chitpur. According to

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1. The Englishman: 9 Aug. 1913, p.10.

2. 'Report Port Facilities Co.', R & S.D.P.: Vol.758, File 3772, p.1.

3. Ibid, p.2.

the Commission this was one of the most controversial questions which it had to consider.<sup>1</sup> The move was considered economically necessary, as large quantities of jute brought down by the Eastern Bengal State Railway were made over to the Port Commissioner's Railway for delivering at over-congested stations, localised in a small area, known generally as Hatkhola Bazar. The optimum capacity at this point was about 275 wagons a day. Any bookings in excess caused congestion resulting in many wagons under load at Chitpur being held up. This generally disorganised the railway traffic of the entire area.<sup>2</sup> When the general resolutions were put to the vote, the Raja signed the document but put on record a note of dissent regarding the shifting of Hatkhola Market.

One may presume that, unlike the others, he was not merely looking at the problem from an economic viewpoint; but was aware of the suffering it would cause the handful of his countryman who had come to rely on Hatkhola as their primary source of income. If the market was closed, all the jute that came there would have to be consigned to Cossipore. Such being the case, the trade would very likely change hands, and the present Bengali dealers and the capitalists of Hatkhola would, in all probability, be ousted by merchants and capitalists at Cossipore who were not Bengalis.<sup>3</sup> This would increase

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1. Ibid, p.41.

2. Ibid.

3. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 23 May 1914, p.322.

the already large ranks of the discontented. As a matter of fact, the Port Facilities Committee in recommending the transfer utterly ignored the interest of a large number of Bengali aratdars. Large trading interests would suffer. The mahajans in removing to Cossipore would be forced to break up their existing business and start new ones at a new site. There would obviously be many who would fail to restart their business.<sup>1</sup> The Committee, refuting the suggestion, pointed out that the mills were unconcerned by the move. Moreover, the majority of the balers and the Marwari Association were in its favour. It pointed out that the only people who were against the move were those who had a vested interest in Hatkhola. By their last remark the Committee corroborated rather than refuted the Raja's assessment of the issue.<sup>2</sup>

With these dangers in mind, the Raja suggested that the congestion could be removed by the acquisition of lands near Nandibari station, for the construction of sidings and store yards, relieving the pressure on Hatkhola without physically shifting the market itself.<sup>3</sup>

The Committee countered that the primary function of a port railway was to bring down goods for actual shipment or remove goods dislodged from vessels. It was not the duty of a port railway to afford terminal

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1. Nat.H.F.: week ending 30 May 1914, p.520.

2. 'Report Port Facilities Com.', R. & S.D.F.: Vol.758, File 3772, p.43.

3. Ibid, p.71.

facilities for the town as distinct from the docks and jetties. Just because it had done so in the past did not justify its continuance.<sup>1</sup> Despite this strong opposition the Raja's strong note of dissent was accepted by the Government.<sup>2</sup> Reporting on the Raja's activities, the Bengalee stated that the press congratulated him for not having failed in his duty as the only Indian member of the enquiry committee.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Raja dexterously satisfied the Indian needs and, at the same time, safeguarded imperial trade interests.

It was in this very port that the Government faced a most unexpected crisis in the following months. For a number of years people from the Punjab, in small numbers, had been emigrating to Canada for more lucrative employment. A time arrived when the Canadian authorities decided that the optimum had been reached, and Asian immigration needed to be discouraged. Legislation was enacted to comply with which would be next to impossible for Indians wishing to travel there. The journey from the port of departure to the port of destination had to be continuous, and each immigrant was required to have at least two hundred dollars in his possession.<sup>4</sup>

The new laws caused great inconvenience and bitterness in the ranks of the Indian residents. As no line of steamers sailed between India and Canada "continuous passage" acted as a visible barrier to the aspiring

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1. Ibid, p.42.

2. Bengal Zamindars, pp.69,70; - found no corroboration from official sources.

3. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 6 June 1914, p345.

4. Ibid: week ending 23 May 1914, p.323.

immigrants. In exasperation three Sikhs came to India to seek the cooperation of the Indian Government, and various other public organisations in redressing their difficulties.<sup>1</sup> In response to their appeal a public meeting was held at Simla, with Surendranath Banerjee in the chair, to discuss the position of Indians in Canada. Immediately the issue was converted into a weapon with which to strike the Authorities. The chairman loudly proclaimed that the issue raised the wider question of the status of citizens of the British Empire.<sup>2</sup>

At this stage the aspiring emigrants were given a helping hand by a Sikh named Gurdit Singh. He chartered a Japanese steamer, the Komagata Maru, for six hundred Indians.<sup>3</sup> An apparently simple act of no importance turned explosive when the Maru reached Vancouver. The Canadians refused the passengers entry. The Indian press picked up the cause, and converted the episode into a test of British sincerity regarding the free movement of all subjects of the Crown within the Empire.<sup>4</sup> Under the auspices of the Indian Association a public meeting was held in which Jitendra Nath Banerjee proclaimed that "the keynote of the meeting was not peace but war, because war had already been declared by the people of the colonies against the Indians".<sup>5</sup>

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1. The Englishman: 11 July 1913, p.4.

2. Ibid: 19 Sept. 1913, p.5.

3. Ind.owned N.P.: week ending 23 May 1914, p.323.

4. Ibid: week ending 30 May 1914, p.329.

5. The Englishman: 11 July 1914, p.6.



After six months the struggle came to an end, and the ship sailed back to Calcutta. With its arrival the second phase of the Maru incident began. The Authorities decided that it would be unwise to allow the passengers to disembark in Calcutta proper. Arrangements were made for the ship to arrive at Budge Budge, and be kept in isolated surveillance till they could be despatched by train straight from there, instead of travelling on from Howrah as was usually done. This unusual procedure created doubts as to the Government's intentions in the already strained minds of the passengers. When they were allowed to leave the ship, a large section of them started marching towards the city, and were already four miles away before they could be induced to return.<sup>1</sup> The tension increased further and snapped during the evening, resulting in a riot between seven and eleven o'clock at night.<sup>2</sup>

The affair was of an extremely delicate nature. The War had begun, and Lord Kitchener had predicted that it would last for at least three years. The passengers were primarily composed of Sikhs and Jats, the most important sections of the military population of India.<sup>3</sup> Many of them were retired sepoys who wished to emigrate for pecuniary reasons.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the matter

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1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 17 Oct. 1914, pp.1093,1094.

2. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 10 Oct. 1914, p.596.

3. Ibid: week ending 19 Sept. 1914, p.555.

4. Ibid: week ending 17 Oct. 1914, p.615.

involved inter-provincial, inter-colony and imperial relationships. There could have also been the manipulating hands of Germany at the back of it. If handled badly, the incident could gain inflated proportions and get out of hand. The Viceroy decided to appoint a commission of officials and non-officials to look into the matter<sup>1</sup> while the rioters were kept in police custody.

It was difficult to select a Bengali suitable for the work. The members of the Bengal Council concluded that S.P. Sinha would inspire most confidence among the type of people likely to criticise the Government. But, as Carmichael pointed out to them, the problem was not a localised one calling for a personality who could satisfy the Bengalis as well as the rest of the country. Obviously, the person selected would have to be one who would not use the opportunity to damage the image of the imperial commonwealth. However, he would also have to be satisfactory to the European residents of Bengal. The choice ultimately fell on the Maharaja of Burdwan.<sup>2</sup> Carmichael was right in his assessment that the Bengalis would accept his nomination as much as Sinha's: this was shown by the reaction of the Indian press. The Bengalee acknowledged the wisdom of the appointment, as the Maharaja was the recognised leader of both the "landed nobility" and the "other educated community" and was universally "admired for his private worth and public virtues".<sup>3</sup>

During the enquiry the Maharaja established points which helped to clear the air. The Indian press alleged

1. Nat.A.P.: week ending 24 Oct. 1914 p.1123
2. Carmichael to Harcourt, 11 Oct.1914, C.P.I.: 1914, Vol.Val2, pt.I, p.293.
3. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 24 Oct. 1914, p.626.

that none of the passengers, including the Indians returning to Canada, had been allowed entry. The Maharaja brought to light, during the interrogation, that the twenty-two returning passengers found no such difficulty. He also established that the allegation that the British Indian authorities had been telegraphically advised by the officers of the Maru to take an aggressive attitude towards the malcontents among the passengers was totally false. Moreover, the shooting that followed their arrival was not caused by any undue recklessness on the part of the forces. The casualties, which did not include women and children, as alleged, did not exceed reasonable numbers under the circumstances. Finding the situation critical, the commanding officer was within his rights to take the decision to open fire in the absence of the District Magistrate, and the only Executive Counsellor available in Calcutta. While questioning the Chief Secretary of Bengal, the Maharaja probed deep into the question at this most sensitive point. It was also alleged that the scuffle originated when some Sikhs who stepped forward to drink water were pulled back by their hair. The Maharaja brought to light that in fact all that they had been asked to do was to wait where they were, as the water could be brought to them.

Having dealt with all the questions troubling the Indian press and the public, he went into the

allegation of the European community that the Sikhs were disaffected German agents who, in collaboration with the Bengalis of Calcutta, created the trouble for ulterior motives. It was suggested that a signal had been given when the first shot was fired, and the Sikhs rose as one man against the forces. He brought out that the Sikhs were all sitting quietly on the grass when the first shot was fired, and that the Bengalis present did not make any undue noise, nor did the Sikhs have any contact with the Bengali leaders of Calcutta. Moreover, there were forty-eight other guns in the possession of the steamer officers, as against the usual two, indicating that they could just as well have been used for the first shot. Furthermore, the alleged sabre (kirpan) wounds on the casualties could just as well have been bayonet wounds.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Maharaja found answers to the questions bothering the Indian community of Bengal and Punjab. He also satisfied the agitated Europeans of Calcutta. His presence undoubtedly counteracted the possibility of fomenting panic in the public mind caused by sensational headlines like "armed Sikhs in Midnapore" published by irresponsible papers describing the arrest of a solitary fugitive on the run.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that the European community

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1 'Komagata Maru Riot Enquiry Com.Pro.'. 23 Oct. - 4 Dec. 1914', J & P.D.F.: 1914, Vol.1338, Vol.II of Pro. pp.16,33,34,42,43,46,62,68.

2. Nat.F.P.: week ending 17 Oct. 1914, p.1090.

saw the intriguing hands of the Bengali terrorists in all things. The King's visit and the modification of the partition had only acted as a temporary lull for the terrorist movement in Bengal. The tempo gathered speed soon afterwards and the Bengali poison of "anarchism", as the Times miscalled the movement, showed tendencies of spreading into other parts of India. There had even been an attempt on the Viceroy's life at Delhi. The police were quite unable to stem the rising tide of lawlessness in the urban and mufassil areas. The complete collapse of law and order seemed to lurk just around the corner. Fleetwood Wilson was convinced that collapse had already taken place. In his report on Bengal he wrote that, "the Bengal police authorities are almost satisfied to sit down in a hopeless and helpless frame of mind. The whole situation in Bengal appears to be one of moral and administrative collapse."<sup>1</sup> An increase in the numerical strength of the forces had already been tried, and although the Nawab of Dacca informed the authorities that "a recent increase in the local police had effected a really great improvement in Dacca itself",<sup>2</sup> the overall situation had not shown any effective improvement. Even as late as 1913, Nawab Serajul Islam wrote in an infuriated tone in the Englishman, "I do not see any sufficient reason why the police

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1. 'On Bengal Report 15 May 1911', Official Notes: Fleetwood Wilson, Vol.14, p.51.

2. Earle's Minutes on Dacoities & Police 13 May 1911', Ibid, Vol.14, p.59.

is unable to put down the gundas and the budnashes of Calcutta. What is really wanted is a set of energetic and vigilant officers. If such can be secured everything will go right".<sup>1</sup>

A number of senior officials realised the danger of an absolute breakdown and searched for an answer which could prevent such a situation arising. Hardinge apparently decided to seek out local help. During his visit to Calcutta he suggested to the Maharaja of Burdwan that he and other leading men of the province should give the problem their serious consideration.<sup>2</sup> A few weeks after, the Viceroy's suggestion, the Maharaja made a speech from the chair of the British Indian Association pleading for greater sympathy between the police and the public.<sup>3</sup> It was a topic that had been engaging the consideration of the leading Bengalis for some time. The public complained that the police were unsympathetic and inefficient and, instead of being a protection for the people had added a new terror to their existence. They very rarely succeeded in preventing or detecting serious crimes. On the contrary their activities were, more often than not, directed towards the harassment and oppression of innocent men. The situation had come to such a stage that the people put up with the misdeeds of the miscreants rather than seek police protection.<sup>4</sup>

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1. The Englishman: 7 May 1913, p.3.

2. Ind.N.P. & Fer.: week ending 20 March 1915, p.425.

3. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 10 Apr.1915, p.213.

4. Beng.Police Proceedings: Aug. 1915, Vol.9648, p.21.

On the other hand, the police complained that they received little help from the people in their increasingly difficult task of detecting serious crimes, and were prone to ascribing to that fact much of their failure and loss of reputation.<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja was doubtless aware of the fact that he was entering a hazardous field. He was conscious of the high-handed behaviour of some of the police, and the tacit approval of their behaviour by some well-placed Englishmen. Alienating these Europeans would mean the loss of respect in the eyes of an important section of the community depriving him of the possibility of acting as a bridge between them and the others. He had personally witnessed an incident which showed the attitude of some influential Europeans in Calcutta. The Bengalee reported that, arriving to conduct the dress rehearsal of the Oriental Pageant for the royal reception, he found "a crowd gathered on the Maidan to view the rehearsal....The crowd, of course, chiefly consisted of Indians, and a policeman ... was using his authority in a high handed manner. At this instance ... Burdwan came, and seeing the merciless behaviour of the constable, gave him a sharp reprimand. After a few minutes entered from the other side of the pandal a European gentleman, who happened to be no less a personage than a non-official member of the Bengal Council. He came with a whip in his hand and began to

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1. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 17 Apr. 1915, p.223.

treat the crowd to its slashes".<sup>1</sup> Doubtless such thoughtless Englishmen were in the minority.<sup>2</sup> Despite their small numbers, their very existence made it just as necessary to avoid a breach with them, as that would destroy any possibility of being able to approach them as intermediaries.

Apart from some of the English at home who approved police high-handedness, there were senior personalities in England who sympathised with the difficulties that the police claimed they found encountering them. It was not uncommon to find prominent figures like Montagu declaring that "no praise could be too high for their conduct in dealing with anarchical conspiracy of recent years at the risk of their lives".<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Bhupendranath Basu's motion in the Imperial Council in 1912 for a commission of officials and non-officials to enquire into police administration was abruptly turned down with the sarcastic remark that, as the dakoitis were committed by gentlemen "the police of this country would not be expected to have a morality above a class to which they belonged".<sup>4</sup>

Treading his way carefully, the Maharaja, unlike Bhupendranath Basu, diplomatically abstained from throwing the blame on one side or the other.<sup>5</sup> The antidote, according to him, was the appointment of a mixed commission "to enquire into the real cause of the strained

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1. Nat.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 13 Jan.1912, p.16.
  2. J.C.Ker: Political Troubles in India 1907-17, p.viii.
  3. The Englishman: 25 Sept. 1911, p.5.
  4. Ibid: 29 Feb. 1912, p.7.
  5. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 17 Apr.1915, p.223.



relationship between the public and the police".<sup>1</sup> The proposal received wide acclaim in the Indian press. The recommendation was submitted as a memorial of the British Indian Association for the Government's perusal.<sup>2</sup>

Carmichael acknowledged the necessity of enquiring into police affairs by appointing an impartial official, Gourley, to make enquiry into the internal condition of the police.<sup>3</sup> His task was to look into the relationship between the Bengal and the Calcutta police, and put into effect the recommendation made in 1903 regarding the personnel, training and pay of the men. Moreover he was instructed to generally tone up the police force.<sup>4</sup> The Indian press urged that the Government had undoubtedly deputed an able and energetic officer, in whom the public had implicit trust, to look into the matter, but pointed out that nothing short of the independent commission recommended by the Maharaja would satisfy the people,<sup>5</sup> as the enquiry thus set in motion would fall short of looking into the relationship between the police and the people.

Ultimately the outcome was that Carmichael managed to satisfy the demand by a compromise. It was officially announced that Gourley would extend his enquiries from merely looking into the internal conditions of the police

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1. Ibid: week ending 10 Apr. 1915, p.215.
  2. Ind.N.P.: week ending 15 May 1915, p.718.
  3. Ind.H.P. & Per.: week ending 8 May 1915, p.682.
  4. Beng.Police Proceedings: Aug. 1915, Vol.9648, p.15.
  5. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 8 May 1915, p.275.

to the question of improving the relationship between the police and the public.<sup>1</sup> It resulted in the reorganising of the superior staff of the Calcutta Police. The most important change was the substitution of Superintendents who had risen from the ranks by Deputy Commissioners chosen from the Imperial Police Service. They were to be the chief police officers of the various divisions of the city. In this manner it was hoped that a high calibre of men, known for their honesty and administrative efficiency, would be introduced. The drawback of such a reform would be that such men, being virtually outsiders, would lack knowledge of the city and its conditions. As a solution for this, it was suggested that people who had risen from the ranks should not be totally overlooked but also promoted to similar standing. In this way the two could combine and perform the "administrative" and "executive" duties more efficiently.<sup>2</sup> When Carmichael forwarded his report to the Secretary of State, it drew the comment from Chamberlain that it seemed to him that the Governor had treated the matter too lightly for too long.<sup>3</sup>

Internal security was an essential need in the second decade of the twentieth century. A catastrophic war was being fought by the world powers in Europe. Conditions turned critical from the previous decade, and remained so until 1919. The Balkans and the Near East were in a state of crisis. Persia too was a 'tender spot'

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1. Beng. Police Proceedings: Dec. 1915, Vol.9648 p. 89
  2. Kerr to Comm. of Police Cal. 11 Apr. 1916.  
Beng. Police Proceedings Apr. 1916, Vo. 9891 pp81,82
  3. Chamberlain to Chelmsford 5 May 1916, Correspondence S.S.: Vol.2. pt.I., p.33.

on the globe. It worried the British authorities that, a number of Muslim states being involved in the power struggle, the Muslims of India might have found the British attitude unpalatable. Throughout the troubled years between 1907 and 1910, the Indian Muslims held severely aloof from the revolutionary movements in Bengal, secure in the feeling that their interests were safe in the hands of the Government. The first feeling of disquiet arose from the war between Italy and Turkey in 1911 when Great Britain remained neutral. Many prominent Muslims of Calcutta met at the residence of Mohidul Islam to protest against the Italian occupation of Tripoli. A telegram was despatched to the Home Secretary at Simla, requesting the intervention of Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Before the feeling had subsided the modification of the partition was announced. The struggle against the hegemony of Turkey in the Balkans was a further cause of estrangement, since it was represented as a struggle between the Cross and the Crescent.<sup>2</sup> Assessing the situation, Fleetwood Wilson wrote at the beginning of 1913 that "there is no doubt that the long succession of what the Muhammadans consider to be acts of aggression on the part of the Christian nations of Europe has had a very upsetting effect in India."<sup>3</sup> At such a time the problems in Persia would not help matters in any way.

The Government of Bengal feared that the feelings of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal were turning dangerously

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1. The Englishman: 2 Oct. 1911, p.5.

2. Ind.Constit.Ref., p.22.

3. Wilson to Hirtzel 10 Feb. 1913, Correspondence: Fleetwood Wilson, Vol.3. p.92.

bitter towards British rule. There existed the danger of the Muslim peasantry retaliating by joining together in refusing to pay revenue to the Hindu landlords. In that case the Government would find it next to impossible to realise its dues from the zamindars. It would take a long time and endless trouble in the law courts to put things right. The Government decided that the Nawab of Dacca and his associates were the Government's best asset during this critical juncture.<sup>1</sup> Promptly the Muslim nobles were consulted and asked to assist. The Nawab of Dacca, Nawab Shamsul Huda, and several others informed the Government that the Eastern Bengal Muslims cared very little about Persia. They were for the most part Sunnis, and "loved the Shias of Persia as much as Irish Roman Catholic peasants love Ulster Protestants". They felt more strongly about the Sultan of Turkey, but had lost much of their regard for him since he lost the position of absolute ruler. The Nawabs calmed the Government's fears by pointing out that there was an idea among Muslims that it was always well to frighten rulers a little. They quoted a proverb to that effect, and warned that any British official who enquired would be told that things were worse than they actually were.<sup>2</sup>

Difficulties in the Middle East created new problems in the Muslim sphere connected with the annual pilgrim traffic to Mecca. Further discontent on that account could heighten the Muslim disrespect for the British Crown:

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1. Carmichael to Hardinge 1 June 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol.Va9, pt.I, p.301.

2. Carmichael to Hardinge 23 Aug. 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol.Va8, pt.I, p.126

1914 was an especially important year and required more serious treatment than others. It was the year of Akbari Haj which came once every four years. It was estimated that about twenty five thousand pilgrims would like to perform the Haj from India that year.<sup>1</sup>

To overcome the difficulties, the Government of India favoured a scheme worked out by the Bombay Government, for the regulation of pilgrim traffic to Hedjaz, involving the grant of a monopoly of the traffic to a single firm,<sup>2</sup> and the adoption of a system of compulsory return tickets. But it was felt that the mood of the Muslim community should be measured before proceeding any further. Letters were forwarded to local governments instructing them to assess the reaction to the proposed scheme.<sup>3</sup>

The Bengal Government consulted leading Muslim personalities and associations before wording a reply. Although the Bengal Presidency Moslem League disapproved of the plan,<sup>4</sup> the Nawab of Dacca in his private capacity approved of the proposal but put forward a suggestion for consideration which he felt had been overlooked, and could cause ill feelings in the future. He advised that, in the event of the death of a pilgrim who had paid for the return journey, or in the event of a devout pilgrim wishing to remain in Hedjaz, or if one desired to return by overland route, his return fare should be made over to the Central Haj Committee Fund to be used for the general

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1. The Englishman: 4 July 1914, p.6.

2. Turner, Morrison & Co..

3. Viceroy to Sec.St. 2 July 1914, M & S.L.: 1914, Vol. 142, It. no.8, p.1.

4. The Bengalee: 17 July, 1913, p.4.

benefit of the pilgrims. Being a man of independent will he did not hesitate to support the traffic monopoly scheme despite the fact that it was gradually generating a sense of opposition all over the country. The Nawab of Murshidabad on the other hand disapproved of the proposed measure.<sup>1</sup>

The proposition had aroused a general controversy and the Government recognised the necessity of revising the scheme. The Nawab of Murshidabad and his associates from other parts of India had made it abundantly clear that the scheme was unpopular, and even eminent Muslims like the Nawab of Dacca, who favoured the proposal, pointed out that dangerous loopholes were discernible which needed blocking. A fresh proposal was put forward, suggesting that paid secretaries should be attached to the provincial Haj committees, and that a repatriation fund should be established with a lakh of rupees contributed by the Government and an equal amount raised by the Muslim community. This proposal was also circulated round the provinces. This time the Nawab of Murshidabad enthusiastically endorsed the scheme.<sup>2</sup> Nawab A.F.M. Abdur Rahman, speaking on behalf of the Muhammadan Literary Society of Calcutta, pointed out that, though they were against the previous scheme, the new one was positively acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Nawabzada Syed Ashrafuddin Ahmad, President of the Hooghly District Haj Committee,

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1. Offg. Sec. Municipal Beng. to Education Sec. Ind. 12 Sept. 1913, H & S.L.: 1914, Vol. 142, Lt. no. 8, Encl. 7, p. 1.
  2. Murshidabad to Sec. Beng, 10 Sept. 1914, R & S.D.P.: 1912, Vol. 725, File 1797.
  3. Abdur Rahman to Sec. Beng. 27 Nov. 1914, Ibid.

pointed out that the latter half of the proposal would greatly strain the Muslims of Bengal who were poorer than their fellow religionists in Bombay, and he asked the Government for more financial help than a mere fifty percent.<sup>1</sup> The Central National Muhammadan Association also generally approved of the scheme but opined that the repatriation fund should be totally borne by the government as a fair amount of its revenue was levied from the Muslims of the country. It suggested that individual contributions should be voluntary.<sup>2</sup>

On 10 September 1914, the Calutta Haj Committee met in the office of the Commissioner of Police to discuss the above issue. The most prominent speaker in the meeting was Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury. A proposal put forward and carried was the prescribing of higher minimum space for each pilgrim on board. The Nawab dissented, as he considered that that would increase the fare per head, and prevent poor Muslims from being able to perform the Haj. Another proposal discussed was raising the minimum tonnage of pilgrim ships from five hundred to two thousand tons, to be further raised to two thousand five hundred after an interval of five years. That too was opposed by the Nawab. He argued that the increase of tonnage to any figure more than one thousand five hundred tons would result in the virtual granting of a monopoly to one or two English firms. In effect this would introduce the already rejected proposal by the back door.<sup>3</sup>

1. S.A. Ahmad to Und.Sec.Beng. 8 Oct. 1914, Ibid.

2. Hon.Sec. to Und.Sec.Gen.Dept.Beng. 16 Nov.1914, Ibid.

3. Comm. of Police to Chief Sec.Beng. 16 Sept. 1914, Ibid., pp.1,2.

When the Government ultimately worked out the scheme in the light of these opinions, it was decided that the minimum space per pilgrim would be settled in accord with the recommendations of the Life Boats Committee. Regarding the minimum tonnage for ships the subject was deferred till after the war.<sup>1</sup> But as far as the question of the repatriation fund was concerned, the government was met by conflicting opinions. "Some Bengal Associations think that Government should subscribe the whole of the repatriation fund [instead of one half, as proposed], while some Punjabi opinion holds that any Government assistance at all as regards expenditure is inappropriate". It ultimately decided against the advice from Bengal, and instructed the local authorities to more actively persuade the Muslim community to contribute to the fund.<sup>2</sup>

The problems of the Government further increased with the escalation of the War into a global conflict. Both the Maharajas of Cooch Behar<sup>3</sup> and Tripura<sup>4</sup> immediately informed the Government that the entire resources of their states were at the disposal of the Imperial Government for the period of the War. The other nobles also reacted by giving their full support to the British cause. A mammoth public meeting was organised at the Town Hall for 16 August 1914. The meeting, presided

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1. Maclagan to Sec.Gen.Dept.Beng, 13 Apr. 1916, Ibid, p.1.

2. Minute Paper Registration no.2402, 15 May 1916, Ibid, pp.1,2.

3. Chelmsford to Cooch Behar 30 June 1919, L & T(India), Vol.22, pt.2, p.283.

4. I.S.A.B. (Tripura), Vol.17, Report 1914-15, p.1.



by the Maharaja of Burdwan, was one of the biggest gatherings ever witnessed in Calcutta. The President, in no uncertain terms, appealed to his fellow-countrymen to stand firm behind their Emperor. He said, "I appeal to you present here not only to show your enthusiasm and eagerness to serve the British Government or to offer your loyalty to the Throne, but if needs be and if, Heaven forbid, our enemies were to attack India, to rise to a man to defend our Motherland under the Union Jack." The Maharaja of Nashipur emphasised the point further by remarking that "Indians should not remain passive spectators. They had a duty to perform - a duty to their Sovereign". The Raja of Kakina in the same tone suggested that volunteers should be created to help in the war.<sup>1</sup> Their speeches expressed both patriotism and loyalty to the concept of the Imperial Commonwealth. Their attitude stands out in contrast to that of the nationalist leaders. An extreme example of nationalist attitudes was discernable from Bipin Chandra Pal's remark in a meeting held five days earlier. He "gave the nationalist view of the situation and said that as they were integral parts of the universal humanity, the loss of any of the powers at war was a loss to themselves".<sup>2</sup>

In the same pattern as the Calcutta Town Hall meeting, the nobles exerted themselves in their capacity

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1. The Englishman: 15 Aug. 1914, p.3.

2. Ibid: 10 Aug. 1914, p.6.

as intermediaries in directing public opinion in support of the British cause in other parts of the province. A public meeting was held by the Maharaja of Kassimbazar supported by the Raja of Azzimgunj at Murshidabad on 16 August.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Nashipur being busy with the Calcutta meeting, the public meeting at Nashipur was conducted by the Maharaj Kumar.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaj Kumar of Hetampur resolved at a meeting that the "officers and tenants" of the estate and the "nobility and gentry" of the locality express their fervent loyalty to the British Raj and would not be forgetful of their duty in case of need. Moreover, the meeting decided to hold similar meetings all over the district, and distribute pamphlets to campaign for greater loyalty.<sup>3</sup> At Burdwan, Raja Ban Bihari Kapur presided when resolutions "were unanimously passed affirming steadfast devotions to the British Crown and requesting Government to enlist Indians as volunteers to fight for and serve the British Crown and the Empire"<sup>4</sup>. The Raja of Kakina conducted the public meeting at Kurseong.<sup>5</sup> The list of nobles' efforts to mobilise public opinion in support of the British in the war was vigorous and continuous all through the war. Their attitude was summed up by the Nawab of Comilla in a public meeting in the town where he said that it was their duty to express their "profound devotion

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1. The Bengalee: 20 Aug. 1914, p.4.

2. Ibid: 16 Aug, 1914, p.2.

3. Ibid: 9 Aug. 1914, p.1.

4. Ibid: 13 Aug. 1914, p.1.

5. The Englishman: 5 September 1914. p.6.

to the Emperor".<sup>1</sup>

Even before public opinion could be consolidated Turkey threw in her lot with the Central Powers. Her entry would obviously cause serious strain upon the allegiance of the Indian Muslims.<sup>2</sup> A section of the Indian press held that as Bengal was one of the largest Muslim provinces, it would be useful if a manifesto was issued headed by the nawabs calling on their co-religionists to remain loyal to the King.<sup>3</sup> What the journalists were not aware of was that the Government had already contacted them. Carmichael had been keeping in touch with the Muslims in Calcutta through Nawab Shamsul Huda. Even before Turkey's entrance, the Nawab had a proclamation signed by all the leading Bengali Muslims expressing the view that loyalty to the King was their first duty, and kept it ready to put out if war was declared by Turkey.<sup>4</sup> The Governor made it a point to see the Nawab every day and hear his views.<sup>5</sup> The Nawab of Dacca replied to Carmichael's enquiry regarding Eastern Bengal with hopeful news about the feeling of the Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Soon after the outbreak of hostilities the Nawab summoned a meeting at Dacca with the injunction that he "desired every Mahomedan to attend without fail" to understand the communique issued by the Government relating to the war.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 22 Aug. 1914, p.871.

2. Correspondence with Sec.St.on Post War Reforms:  
Montagu, Vol.33, p.3.

3. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 7 Nov. 1914, p.659.

4. Carmichael to Hardinge 26 Aug. 1914, C.P.I.: 1914,  
Vol.Val2, pt.I, p.140.

5. Carmichael to Hardinge 6 Sept. 1914, Ibid: p.165.

6. Carmichael to Hardinge 2 Nov. 1914, Ibid, p.358.

7. The Bengalee: 4 Nov. 1914, p.1.

Other such meetings were held by the Muslim nobles of Bengal. One at the Calcutta Madrassa to discuss what steps should be taken to help the Government during the present crisis was presided over by Nawab Wali Qadr,<sup>1</sup> while an emergency meeting of Muslim students and the members of the Moslem Institute to consider the same question was held under the presidency of Nawab Syed Mahomed Khan.<sup>2</sup> Another one for college students exclusively found Nawab Serajul Islam as one of the principal speakers.<sup>3</sup> Nawab Mahomed Ali Nawab Chaudhury, who had great influence among the Muslims of Tripura, was doing his utmost to explain the position of the Government in the war.<sup>4</sup> But the most forceful remark against the pro-Turkey group came from Nawab Abdul Jabbar. Presiding over the Burdwan Mahomedan Association he said, "We all know that 98 percent of the congregation who assemble every Friday, do not understand the Khutba but the foolish discussion which has emanated from some gentlemen who seldom attend the prayers in mosques may injuriously produce unrest where there is calm."<sup>5</sup> Such a remark from a well known devout Muslim could not be easily ignored.

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1. Ibid: 12 Aug. 1914, p.4.

2. Ibid: 4 Nov. 1914, p.1.

3. Ibid: 5 Nov. 1914, p.2.

4. Ibid: 15 Dec. 1914, p.3.

5. Ibid: 9 Dec. 1914, p.4.

To cap all their efforts the Nawab of Murshidabad issued a manifesto supporting the British. He pointed out that the Ottoman Sultan had started the war unprovoked, for his own good, and under no circumstances could the act be interpreted as a Holy War. Moreover, the British had guaranteed to leave the holy places unmolested. Such being the case, it was only proper to remain loyal to the British Crown<sup>1</sup>. The Nawab was the premier nobleman of Bengal, the living reminder of the glorious past of the Muslims in the province, and the Amir-ul-Omra of the followers of the Prophet. No doubt many Muslims would heed his words.

A mere declaration of loyalty was not enough, in the view of the nobles. Financial help for internal use and control of the domestic market was also urgently required. For the former task the Imperial Indian Relief Fund was created. It was a fund to be utilised primarily for the relief of Indians effected by the war; thus relieving the Imperial exchequer of the burden. As large sums of money would pass through its coffers, people were needed who could handle it with care and caution. Of the fifteen Bengali members selected for the task twelve were noblemen. The Indian joint secretary was also chosen from their ranks.<sup>2</sup> Maharaja Tagore was called upon as joint secretary to raise subscriptions. He communicated with the Ward commissioners in connection with the formation of Ward

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1. Ibid: 26 Nov. 1914, p.4.

2. The Englishman: 22 Aug. 1914, p.5.

organisations for the purpose of raising subscriptions for the Fund. The Maharaja threw himself earnestly into the work.<sup>1</sup> He personally attended every meeting that the Wards organised. In stirring speeches he hammered home that any contribution, "from a pin to an elephant", would be welcome. He called upon the ladies to set aside their pin money. He suggested that collection boxes be placed in front of all temples and mosques. The Indian merchants were implored to set apart a portion of their britti collection for the pujas.<sup>2</sup> Due to his efforts a very substantial sum was collected and forwarded to the Central Fund for Bengal.

The people who contributed the largest sums of money were the Nawab of Murshidabad,<sup>3</sup> the Rajas of Chanchal and Hetampur, the Kumar of Paikpara, the Maharajas of Kassimbazar<sup>4</sup> and Burdwan<sup>5</sup>, with the Maharaja of Tripura heading the list as the largest contributor.<sup>6</sup> Apart from giving personal donations, Raja Jyot Kumar Mukerjee gave variety entertainments in his rajbari at Uttarpara to raise contributions to the Fund.<sup>7</sup>

The war also caused a rapid increase in the prices of essential commodities in the province. If allowed to go too far, the hungry could become a major threat to the Government. To keep a check over the market

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1. Ind.owned Enr.E.P.: week ending 12 Sept. 1914, p.539.
  2. The Englishman: 28 Sept. 1914, p.7.
  3. Ibid: 30 March 1916, p.4.
  4. 'Beng's War Contribution' B.P.P.: Nov. 1919, Vol. 10526, p.34.
  5. Burdwan to Chelmsford 9 Jan. 1917, L & T(India): Vol.18, pt.I, p.11.
  6. Tripura to Chelmsford 4 March 1919, Ibid: Vol.22, pt.I, p.103.
  7. The Englishman: 17 May 1916, p.6.

the Raja of Chakdighi suggested that a standing committee on food prices in Calcutta be formed, and weekly statements on the prices of articles be kept and studied. His advice was accepted and weekly statements were issued.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from financial contributions towards the War, some of the nobles even contributed materials for the wounded and maimed. The Nawab of Murshidabad went so far as to offer the use of his house as a convalescent home for ill and wounded soldiers. According to the Englishman, "it was highly appreciated, as Murshidabad is one of the most beautiful and coolest spots in Lower Bengal".<sup>2</sup> A number of them presented ambulances for use at the front. The Maharaja of Mymensingh headed the list with six of them, closely followed by the Raja of Hetampur who gave five. The Maharaja of Tripura, over and above an ambulance car, presented the army with an ambulance launch.<sup>3</sup> The public also presented an ambulance launch, and raised an ambulance corps trained by Dr. Sarvadhikari to man it. The President of the Bengal Ambulance Corps thus formed was the Maharaja of Burdwan.<sup>4</sup> As an added incentive the Maharaja offered purses of Rs.1,000 to the winners of the Victoria Crosses, Rs.500 for Distinguished Service Orders and Rs.250 for minor decorations.<sup>5</sup>

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1. S & B.P. Singh Roy: Chakdighi Singh Roy Family, p.30.

2. The Englishman: 19 Feb. 1917, p.12.

3. Beng's War Contributions, B.P.P.: Nov. 1919, Vol.10526, p.35.

4. The Englishman: 6 May 1915, p.7.

5. The Bengalee: 23 Oct. 1915, p.4.

It was not the first time that an experiment had been made in raising an organised first-aid unit in Bengal. As early as 1911, the Raj Kumar of Tahirpur had attempted to form a corps of Hindu youths to send to Turkey for nursing the wounded during the Turko-Italian conflict.<sup>1</sup>

As long as the conflagration was confined to Europe and other distant places, the help given by the nobles was of an impersonal nature. With the expansion of the theater of war they assumed more positive posture and prepared for further participation. The Raja of Kakina was the first to come forward. He wrote to the Government that "if at a time like this, when the Empire is engaged in a life and death struggle, we remain completely detached from the mighty efforts organised for its defence, what would our children and our childrens' children say and think of us?.... I now crave leave to be allowed to raise, train and maintain entirely at the expense of my estate an armed force ... and hold them ready for internal duties."<sup>2</sup> But he soon merged himself with the larger movement of forming a provincial army.

For some time past the Government had been turning a deaf ear to the appeal of the intelligentsia for the formation of a Bengal army. The change of attitude can be noticed from about the

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1. Nat.H.P.:week ending 18 Nov. 1911, p.1391.

2. Kakina to DuBoulay 11 Feb. 1915, C.P.I.: 1915, Vol,Val3, pt.I, p.60.



time the Maharaja of Burdwan convinced the British Indian Association that they should support the demand.<sup>1</sup> They appealed to Chelmsford to give a sympathetic support to the popular call.<sup>2</sup> By August 1916, the formation of a Bengal army was a certainty.<sup>3</sup> The promoters of the scheme were twenty in number, equally balanced between nobles and others.<sup>4</sup> The army was to begin with a strength of two hundred and fifty. This would gradually be raised to a complete regiment. One of the primary reasons that convinced the Authorities that the move was for the best was the hope that its formation would be "an outlet for the energy and ambition which otherwise would be directed wholly against the Government,"<sup>5</sup>

The task of actual recruiting was allotted to Dr. Mullick, a prominent figure in Calcutta. As the nucleus of the Bengal Double Company, as the Bengal Regiment came to be known, prepared to leave for training, the Maharaja of Burdwan stated rather emphatically that on them depended the future glory of Bengal, and that they should remember that Bengal was on trial. The initial reports on the progress from the training centre were very encouraging. But it

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1. The Englishman: 1 Apr. 1916, p.7
  2. Nat.N.P.:week ending 15 Apr.1916, p.541.
  3. Ind.N.P. & Per.:week ending 19 Aug. 1916, p.1140.
  4. The Englishman: 14 June 1916, p.7.
  5. Chamberlain to Chelmsford 18 Dec. 1916,  
Correspondence S.S.: Vol.2, pt.1, p.329.

soon dawned on the Administration that Dr. Mullick's and his associates' influence was limited to the urban areas. That was unsatisfactory. To rectify the defect the Commander-in-Chief wrote to the Viceroy, "We want to recruit a battalion of at least 1,000 men. I understand that there would be no real difficulty in doing this if the matter is taken up in the right way. I am advised that the best method of so doing would be to invite the assistance of His Excellency the Governor of Bengal with a view to his forming a strong committee which would include members of the provincial nobility and great landowners <sup>1</sup>...." Based on his assessment, the next Bengali Regiment Committee that was called had a larger element of noblemen. It comprised sixteen nobles and eight others. Moreover, the chair was given to the Maharaja of Burdwan.<sup>2</sup>

The nobles encouraged recruiting from the mufassil. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar<sup>3</sup> and the Raja of Tahirpur<sup>4</sup> announced that any rayat joining the army would be exempted from paying rent. The Maharaja of Nashipur offered a sum of Rs.10 per month from his estate funds for the support of the family of men who enlisted.<sup>5</sup> The Maharaja of Dighapatia not only exempted them from paying the rent but further added

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1. Chelmsford to Carmichael 13 Feb.1917, L & T(India), Vol.18, pt.I, p.51.

2. Monahan to Chief Sec.Beng. 22 June 1917, B.P.P.: July 1917, Vol.10116, p.117.

3. Bengal Zamindars, p.5.

4. The Englishman: 29 Jan. 1917, p.11.

5. Ibid: 7 June 1917, p.6.

a sum of Rs.4 a month as bonus until the Government increased the pay of Indian soldiers.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Dinajpur offered his tenants ten bighas of free land to each of the recruits in active service.<sup>2</sup> Raja Sreenath Roy of Sovabazar applied the full weight of his personal influence to stimulate interest in enlisting.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Nymensingh called on his tenants to rebutt the charge so often made that the Bengalis were mere talkers and not men of action.<sup>4</sup> The Raja of Hetampur entertained the soldiers with the hope that contact with them and hearing of their adventures would induce others from his estate to join the forces.<sup>5</sup>

Even the ladies of some of their families came forward to encourage the men at the front. Nawabzadi Amina Banu, sister of Nawab Salimulla of Dacca, was one of the chief participants in the Dacca branch of the Bengal Women's War Relief Committee.<sup>6</sup> The Maharaj Kumaris of Burdwan sent gifts of clothes, food, and the expenses for the feast of Bhratriditya (Brothers Day) to the commandant, officers and soldiers of the Ambulance Corps, with the message that their sisters in Bengal were praying for their safety and success.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ibid: 28 May 1918, p.4.
  2. Ibid: 11 June 1918, p.4.
  3. Ibid: 25 Sept.1918, p.9.
  4. The Bengalee: 24 Sept. 1916, p.4.
  5. The Englishman: 6 July 1918, p.6.
  6. The Bengalee: 12 Oct. 1915, p.3.
  7. Ibid: 9 Nov. 1915, p.4.

Apart from persuading and encouraging others a number of them decided to join the forces themselves. Maharaj Kumar Hitendra Narayan of Cooch Behar saw active service in France.<sup>1</sup> Nawab Habibulla Khan of Dacca, after making a stirring appeal to other Muslims to enlist, volunteered himself for service,<sup>2</sup> and served one year on active duty.<sup>3</sup> The nephew of the Raja of Kakina was one of the first to enlist after the formation of the Bengal Double Company.<sup>4</sup> Nawabzada S.E. Haider, son of the Nawab of Comilla and son-in-law of Nawab Serajul Islam, finding that to get a commissioned rank would take some time, enlisted in the Double Company as a sepoy, and proceeded to Karachi for training.<sup>5</sup>

There was also a plan to constitute a mounted unit to form a corps d'elite for men of well-to-do distinguished families of any religion, any caste or any race so long as they were physically fit, within the age limit and able to purchase a horse. The last condition could easily prevent a number of families faced with pecuniary difficulties from enlisting. Thus the Maharajas of Cooch Behar and Kassimbazar offered the cost of providing chargers. The proposition was put to Col.A.J. Pugh, commandant of the European Light Horse, who threw himself heart and soul into the scheme, with the result that it reached a practical stage by August 1917. The Maharaja of Cooch

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1. Chelmsford to Cooch Behar 30 June 1919, L & T(India), Vol.22, pt.2, p.283.
  2. The Englishman: 19 Feb. 1917, p.4.
  3. Ibid: 28 Dec. 1918, p.8.
  4. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 11 Nov.1916, p.1499.
  5. The Englishman: 28 July 1918, p.4.

Behar offered two plots at the corner of his Calcutta residence for the training school and also the stable facilities. Among those who enrolled were the members of the Cooch Behar, Putya and Paikpara families and the son of Raja Kishori Lal Goswami.<sup>1</sup> Though it was technically open to all, the Bengal Light Horse primarily enlisted nobles and other affluent people.<sup>2</sup>

It was lucky for the nobles that the Bengal Light Horse did exist, as the infantry proved a great disappointment. The exhilaration at their success at being able to persuade the Government to permit the formation of the Double Company could not have lasted long. It was not long before the Indian press began to assert that if the army was to be opened to the Bengalis as a career, the current salary would attract none. They suggested that it should be raised by nearly one hundred and fifty percent to satisfy them. The argument put forward was that if any objection was raised on the ground that sepoys from other parts of the country "sold their lives" for the lesser amount it should be remembered that "Bengali bhadralokes may claim that their lives are more valuable than those of the common sepoy".<sup>3</sup> The worst of it was that the Bengalis never said anything about the generally low pay of the Indian soldier before their demand for the Bengal army was conceded.<sup>4</sup> On the other

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1. Ibid: 30 July, 1917, p.8.

2. Ibid: 25 Feb. 1919, p.5.

3. Ind.N.P. & Per. week ending 19 Aug. 1916, p.1140.

4. Ibid: week ending 16 Sept. 1916, p.1269.

hand they maintained that they were willing to join but that the British disallowed Bengali recruits as they wished to spread the myth that Bengalis were cowards. The nobles must have felt that their compatriots merely made demands to humiliate the Government with the firm conviction that their demands would never be met. When the nobles helped to realise their demands they promptly backed out with some clumsy excuse. Moreover, the recruits when put to actual service did not prove very battle worthy. They lacked stamina, and the percentage of the sick was abnormally high.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, according to the official report the "Indian Princes, and the great landed proprietors responded splendidly from the very beginning of the war to the calls made upon them."<sup>2</sup>

While the war was in full progress the Bengal Government stood on the verge of a social problem which could have become explosive. A rumour spread round Calcutta that the ghi (clarified butter) sold in the market was thoroughly adulterated. Being the product of the sacred animal of the Hindus and the normal cooking media for all, ghi played a paramount part not only in the diet<sup>3</sup> but also in the religious practices of all orthodox Hindus. Such being the case its adulteration could produce angry and dangerous reactions from the public.

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1. Ronaldshay to Montagu 10 June 1918, Letters:  
Montagu, Vol.29, p.17.
  2. Ind.Constit.Reform., p.17.
  3. L.J.L. Dundas: Essayez, p.80.

To nip it in the bud before the issue gained gigantic proportions, a deputation of eighty eminent Hindus was formed, headed by the Maharaja of Burdwan, to call upon the Governor. The deputation comprised most of the well known leaders, both nobles and others, of the province.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja pointed out in his address of 31 August that, if the question was not dealt with immediately, it would lead to considerable trouble during the forthcoming festival of Durga Puja. Ghi was an indispensable article in religious ceremonies, and if it was adulterated with animal fat its use amounted to defilement and was destructive to the merit of the ceremony. He emphasised that "when the inferior article is such as to be injurious to health and revolting to the religious sentiments of the bulk of the people by whom it is used, surely then it becomes the duty of the Government to step in and prevent such adulteration".<sup>2</sup>

Ronaldshay appreciated the importance of the situation. He was aware of the fact that it had been found out that of sixty-seven samples analysed for purity, only seven were found to consist of pure ghi. One was found to contain only five percent of ghi, another no ghi at all. At this stage the Hindus reacted by summoning learned pandits from Benares to advise them on the action to be taken. After two days of deliberation the priests pronounced their edict which had an electrifying effect.

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1. This is one more example of the Indian Association group submerging under the leadership of the nobles.

2. The Englishman: 1 Sept. 1917, p.3.

The defiled Hindus had to perform a purification ceremony on the banks of the Ganges. Three thousand Brahmins gathered at the ghat on the Hughli river, and a vast multitude of people waited to be purified.<sup>1</sup>

Ronaldshay assured the deputation that he would see to it that emergency measures were introduced in the shortest possible time. He introduced an Emergency Bill in the Council, suspended the rules of business so that it might pass through all its stages in a single day.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the Act was put into effect before the situation got out of hand.

The last important task that the Bengali leaders and the major associations were called upon to perform as intermediaries before the turn of the decade was to opine on the proposed constitutional reforms which came into effect after the war. Ten associations' representatives were selected for interview with Montagu, and seventeen individuals were required to give their opinions in writing. Of the delegations that called on the Secretary of State, seven were led by noblemen and of the individuals eight were of the same group.<sup>3</sup> The contrast in attitude between the two status groups was blatantly pronounced in the advice which they gave.

The Indian Association emphasised the need for a very strong element of self-government. They suggested

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1. L.J.L. Dundas: Essayez; p.3.

2. 'Cal Municipal (Amend) Bill 1917', B.L.P.: Jan. 1918, Vol.10304, p.15.

3. Addresses Presented at Cal.: Montagu, Vol.34.



that the entire body of members of the Legislative Councils or at least four fifths of them, should be elected; every district being adequately represented with due reference to its wealth, population and educational advancement, under a system of direct voting.<sup>1</sup>

Surendranath Banerjea went further and said that the Executive should be controlled by, and be responsible to, the Legislature. All branches of the provincial administration should be made over to a popular cabinet ordinarily holding office for five years, but liable to be dismissed upon a vote of censure. The popular cabinet was to be formed by the leader of the house.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, communal and special interests' representations were turned down. Bhupendranath Basu as early as the previous reform had suggested that such a method was a new form of caste system.<sup>3</sup>

The British Indian Association, on the other hand, was of the opinion "that the condition of India is so peculiar that it is gravely to be doubted whether any of the various forms of government prevailing in self-governing countries could be introduced here without material modifications".<sup>4</sup> Once more the basic difference lay in accepting western institutions in their entirety, and in arguing for their adaptation to suit local situations. The reasons for the latter attitude is clear from the remarks in the individual written opinions forwarded

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1. Based on the English model.

2. Addresses Presented at Calcutta: Montagu, Vol.34, Memo.

3. Basu to Maffey 23 Aug. 1918, L & T(India): Vol.15, pt.I. p.320.

4. Addresses Presented at Calcutta: Montagu; Vol.34, Memo (Enclo.).

by the nobles.

Nawab Shamsul Huda wrote that "self-government is not an end by itself, but only a means to an end, the end being the happiness and contentment of the great mass of people who have no clear idea of self-government and no particular anxiety for it. To them good government is much more important than self-government. Their happiness can only be secured by material prosperity".<sup>1</sup> Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee elaborated the point stating, "The different races in India speak 185 different languages and profess as many religious creeds. Many of her peoples are as much alien to one another as the English are to them.... In such circumstances unity of purpose and policy among Indian races are impossible and ideas of Home Rule and responsible Government by Indians are mere idle visions... The salvation of India and the prosperity of her people lie in the continuance of British Rule."<sup>2</sup>

The other point on which they disagreed with the leaders of the intelligentsia was the abolition of special interest representation. The Maharaja of Burdwan even before the question of any reform came up had voiced his conviction to Curzon that Democracy as practised in the west would definitely lead to a revolutionary situation in the country.<sup>3</sup> They were conscious of the fact that such a method would not satisfy the needs of the complicated society of the country since too many sections would feel that they were not represented. As a matter of fact their own landholders' interests would be handled by people involved in professions and services. The Muslim nobles further had the

1. Carmichael to Chelmsford 20 Aug. 1916, (Enclo), G.B.R., p.135.

2. Addresses Presented at Calcutta: Montagu, Vol.34, Memo.

3. Burdwan to Curzon 3 Aug.1911, Letters: Curzon, Vol.426. pp.105, 106.

ominous fear that it would lead to the legislative bodies being swamped by representatives not interested in their community. The nobles involved in trade and commerce also worried that they would lose their voice in the assemblies to professional politicians.

Nawab Serajul Islam maintained that "Home Rule in the form demanded by the Congress will be prejudicial to Muhammadan interests".<sup>1</sup> At the time nineteen non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council had handed in a memorial with the demands for reforms. Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury refused to be a party to it as he felt it was prejudicial to the Muslim community.<sup>2</sup> Fearing a similar threat, Raja Reshee Case Law stated that Home Rule was not suited for India and the executive councils should be left undisturbed. He wrote, "I am not at one with some of my fellow-countrymen in getting Indians appointed to every high post of great responsibility." He supplemented the remark by suggesting that if any change was necessary in the Legislative Council, the franchise should be given to "mining, mills, and to Indian commerce and important minorities".<sup>3</sup> The Kumar of Paikpara said that self-government without proper training from the lowest level "must in the end inevitably lead to the forming of oligarchies leaving the bulk of the people untouched".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Addresses presented at Calcutta: Montagu, Vol.34, Memo

2. Chelmsford to Chamberlain 13 Apr. 1917, Correspondence S.S., Vol.31, pt.II, pp.107-114.

3. Addresses Presented at Calcutta: Montagu, Vol.34., Memo.

4. Kumar M.C. Sinha: Constitutional Reform for India, p.3.

How far their opinion counted as against the other is difficult to ascertain. But what is possible to say is that by the end of Carmichael's stay in Bengal, the Governor's view on the subject had become similar to the nobles', contrary to his initial desire to be remembered as the People's governor as he wished on his arrival. In his recommendation to the Viceroy he wrote that "the goal must necessarily be a distant one... A few years ago I should not have said this ... but I realise that Indians as a people look much further into the future than we do, and are more likely than we should be to accept a goal which clearly cannot be reached for many years".<sup>1</sup> Obviously he was not paying a great deal of attention to those who demanded Home Rule and self-government in the immediate future.

From this study of their activities during the period under review it becomes apparent that the nobles were not only very active but also very effective as intermediaries in the political plane. Their political function had undergone a complete change: from being political administrators they had become intermediaries in public affairs. Their effort in acting as a bridge was acknowledged by the Administration. That is apparent from the numerous occasions when they were called upon to help in enquiries, assess public mood and mobilise public opinion. They were expected to keep the officials informed of the overall condition of the province, both social<sup>2</sup> and political,<sup>3</sup>

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1. Carmichael to Chelmsford 20 Aug. 1916 (Enclo.) G.B.R., p89.

2. J.H. DuBoulay to Butler 25 Nov. 1910, C.P.I.:1910-11  
Vol.Va5, pt.II, p.3. (Burdwan)

3. Minto to Morley 2 Jan. 1907, Letters:Morley, Vol.II,  
p.5 (Darbhanga)

and help them maintain efficient control over the local situation. Carmichael, on his arrival in April, learnt much of the present condition of Murshidabad, its local needs and other matters of public importance, from the local zamindars and nobles such as the Nawab of Murshidabad and the Maharaja of Kassimbazar and Nashipur. Similarly, he was briefed on the situation at Burdwan by the Maharaja of Burdwan.<sup>1</sup> It was for such discussions that they were given the right of private entree to the Government House. Frequent interviews were granted to them by the head of the province.

Apart from that they were called to social gatherings where matters could be discussed in informal surroundings. Carmichael relied rather heavily on such informal gatherings. In his biography it is stated that no one knew better than Lord Carmichael how to smooth difficulties away at a dinner party.<sup>2</sup> Ronaldshay also stated that the simplest means of achieving the object of meeting important residents were small and intimate dinner parties.<sup>3</sup> The first thing he did on his arrival was to meet Indian noblemen, officers and other public persons.<sup>4</sup> Chelmsford's first visit to Calcutta was a private one. He wished to get acquainted first with the problems that he would have to face and then hold a public entry at a later date. That was necessary, as the problems were many and no time

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1. Tours: 7-13 Dec. 1913, pp.29,53.

2. M.Carmichael: Lord Carmichael, p.149.

3. L.J.L. Dundas: Essayez, p.70.

4. Ronaldshay to Chamberlain 21 Apr.1917, Governors Letters: 1915-17. pp.360,361.

could be wasted due to the War.<sup>1</sup> He explained that his first aim and basic reason for coming was to familiarise himself with the measures taken by the Government of Bengal to repress political crime and the powers required by it to continue to do so after the expiry of the Defence of India Act.<sup>2</sup> One of the things he did during his visit was to give a dinner party. The guest list comprised five Bengalis, of whom three were nobles. Due to inter-dining difficulties, due to caste barriers, all such notables could not be called for the meals. Such difficulties were overcome by inviting more people for after-dinner tete-a-tete. For that fourteen more Indians were invited by Chelmsford, of whom ten were noblemen.<sup>3</sup> Curzon, even after his departure from India continued to rely on the Nawab of Dacca and the Maharaja of Burdwan to keep him abreast of Bengal affairs and he kept up informal correspondence with them all along.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from keeping the Administration abreast with the overall situation, we find that the nobles were further relied upon to advise the Government on aspects of administration for which they were non-official specialists. The obvious ones were on rural Bengal and on revenue administration. The Muslim nobles were also expected to have an intimate knowledge of the needs of their community.

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1. The Englishman: 12 Apr. 1916, p.6.

2. Chelmsford to Chamberlain 14 Apr. 1916, Correspondence S.S.: Vol.2, pt.II, pp.3,4.

3. The Englishman: 12 Apr. 1916, p.6.

4. Letters: Curzon, Vols. 426,427.

With the partition of Bengal, the Nawab of Dacca was installed as the Eastern Bengal and Assam provincial administrator's chief non-official adviser and main agent for the distribution of patronage.<sup>1</sup> Even after the revocation of the partition, the Nawab, with Nawab Shamsul Huda, remained important advisers of Carmichael.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the nobles were entrusted with tasks as Indian representatives in public committees which required delicate handling, presumably as they dealt with problems involving imperial issues. Such matters included imperial trade, colonial relationships, internal security, international war. Such being the case, it is not surprising that when the Imperial Government in London felt the need to consult individuals on the position of Indians in British Guiana, Trinidad and Fiji, the only two consulted from Bengal were the Maharajas of Kassimbazar and Burdwan.<sup>3</sup> At times it was even felt useful to put nationalist leaders into committees expected to sit for some length of time, so that they would be kept occupied and thus remain manageable. According to Fleetwood Wilson it was so in the case of Gokhale's appointment in the Public Service Commission.<sup>4</sup> He laid great stress on appointing Gokhale with this very purpose in mind.<sup>5</sup>

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1. M. Carmichael: Lord Carmichael, pp.168,169.

2. J.H. Broomfield, p.51.

3. Donald to Div.Commissioners & Maharajas 3 Oct. 1917, B.F.P.(Emigration).: July 1918, Vol.10298, p.9.

4. Wilson to Lady Hardinge 25 June 1912, Correspondence: Fleetwood Wilson, Vol.7, pp.27,28.

5. Wilson to Hardinge 2 March 1912, Ibid, Vol.5, p.63.

In this way the more delicate problems doubtless could be left to the officials and the noblemen to handle. Their political attitude, their aptitude as inter-organizational leaders, and their personal eminence in the socio-economic life of the province made them ideally suited for the work.



CHAPTER IV.ELECTIONS AND COUNCILS.

Over the years consultative politics became more formal. Legislative and executive councils were created and developed into the focal points of political activities within the province and the country as a whole. In the second decade of this century the Bengal nobles found themselves entrusted by the Administration with a specific task of acting as a counterpoise to the belligerent intelligentsia in the councils. Consequently, there ensued a bitter conflict with the leaders of the intelligentsia. Despite their efforts to retain the leadership in the political field, the nobles were outshone at every turn by the new group in the Chamber. Thus began their downfall. Gradually they were eased from their eminent position and superceded by the rival group.

As pointed out before, the Mutiny convinced the Government and Imperial Authorities of the dangers arising out of the entire exclusion of Indians from association with the legislation of the country. Amongst other factors, this attitude resulted in the passing of the Indian Councils Act 1861. In accord with the Act a legislative council for Bengal was created. Its function was strictly limited to legislation. It was expressly forbidden to transact any business except for the consideration and enactment of legislative measures introduced by the Government. Moreover, a private member was

forbidden to entertain any motion for leave to introduce a Bill.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the Executive Council and additional members summoned from time to time for specific subjects, the Act brought into existence a permanent legislative council in Bengal consisting of twelve nominated members comprising four European officials, two Indian officials, four European non-officials and two Indian non-officials.<sup>2</sup>

It was another thirty years before the councils developed further. The Bengal Legislative Council had included Indian members since 1861, but it was not until 1892 that the elective principle was introduced, and Indian members had gained some parity in numbers with the Europeans.<sup>3</sup> Lord Dufferin's Committee suggested that the British bring into public affairs the "gentry" and "nobility" of the country, and that elections be introduced as far as possible. The franchise was to be assessed in accord with a high property qualification for the direct electors, and by local bodies, universities, associations, and other similar groups, by recommended delegates acting as electoral colleges. Based on these recommendations, the Act of 1892 was formed.<sup>4</sup>

The Act resulted in the creation of a large legislative body with a council comprising a maximum of ten

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1. Ind.Constit.Ref., pp.31,32.

2. Parliamentary Papers Great Britain 1890: Vol.LIV,  
pp.106,107.

3. J.H. Broomfield, p.18.

4. Ind.Constit.Ref., pp.36,34.

nominated officials, a minimum of three nominated non-officials, and seven elected members. The seven elected members consisted of one from the Calcutta Corporation, two from municipalities, two from district boards, one from the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, and one from the University of Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, one seat from the municipalities located in the mufassil was transferred to the large landowners.<sup>2</sup> Despite the introduction of elections, the principle behind the process of legislation remained unaltered: members were still unable to introduce Bills in the Council.

The first decade of the century experienced the next constitutional concession. It was this Act that was in force during the period under study. With the object of satisfying the constitutional aspirations of the day, Minto told his legislative council in 1907 that his Government had been considering how to give the people of India wider opportunities of expressing their views on how they should be governed. The increasing readiness of the landed and the commercial classes to share in public life and to render assistance to the Government, and the desire of the rapidly growing numbers of educated Indians to have a larger voice in administrative questions, had convinced Morley and himself that it was time to carry to a further stage the reforms previously effected. The underlying idea

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1. Parliamentary Papers Great Britain 1894: Vol. LVIII, pp. 656-662.

2. Ind. Constit. Ref., p. 36.

of the Morley-Minto changes , introduced in 1909, was to associate the non-officials to a greater extent with Government in the decision of public questions.

With the above end in view, one seat on the executive council was, in practice, reserved for an Indian. Moreover, the legislative council was expanded and given a larger elected element. It was also given a non-official - elected and nominated - majority. The idea was to give members a wider opportunity of exercising influence on questions of administration and finance. The institution of finance committees in the council also gave the non-official members a direct share in forming limited portions of the budget.<sup>1</sup> But it must be kept in mind that the functions of the legislative council continued primarily as that of an advisory machinery to gauge public aspirations. The Executive was not made responsible to the legislature. The legislative council was a formal sounding-board for assessing public opinion acting as an aid to the Executive in formulating policy. Even when leave to introduce a Bill proposed by a non-official member was granted, it was with the object of eliciting public opinion on the proposal.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of the council reforms was worked out between Morley and Minto. The two men were agreed that the aim should be to increase the indigenous support for the Government. Where the two disagreed was the

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1. Ibid, p.6.

2. Gov.Gen. to Crewe 18 Jan. 1912, L.L.: 1912, Vol.464, Lt.no.I. of 1912, p.1.

relative political importance of various Indian communities and the manner in which they should be represented. Morley maintained that the essential object of the reforms must be to satisfy the intelligentsia and to provide their leaders with opportunities for worthwhile political service. Minto dissented. He insisted that there were other groups, communities and interests equally important to consider.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1906, Minto stated that "it was absolutely necessary to guard the important interests existing in the country." According to the Viceroy, the important interests could be classified into four. The first listed was the interest of the hereditary nobility and landed classes who had a great and permanent stake in the country.<sup>2</sup> He clarified the reason for his observation the following year in a circular forwarded to the various local governments. In it he stated, "The ruling chiefs and the landholding and commercial classes, possessing a material stake in the country, and representing the most powerful and stable elements of Indian society, have now become qualified to take a more prominent part in public life, and to render a larger measure of public assistance to the Executive Government".<sup>3</sup> In the opinion of the Viceroy, the "ruling chiefs", the "landholding" classes, and the "commercial" class represented not only the most powerful but also the

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1. J.H. Broomfield, pp.36,37.

2. 'Minto's Minutes of 15 Aug. 1906', Letters: Morley, Vol.9, p.25.

3. 'Circular from Govt. of India 24 Aug. 1907', P. Mukherji: Indian Constitutional Documents Vol.I.,

most stable elements in the country. Indeed, in Bengal, the seat of viceregal authority until 1911, the leadership of all three was vested in the nobles.

A close scrutiny of Minto's letters to Morley reveals that he was greatly preoccupied with what he described as the "Bengalee agitators".<sup>1</sup> Fraser, the Lieut. Governor of Bengal, held similar views. Commenting on Minto's suggestion, he stated that what was required was a "system of election which will secure truly representative men".<sup>2</sup> He later explained that by true representation he did not mean a more extended representation but a more balanced one of different interests in the country.<sup>3</sup> Unless the Administration proceeded "on lines which will secure the representation of those who have a real stake in the country and their cooperation with us in matters concerning the Government, we must look for growing dissatisfaction. The present policy is developing a large number of men who talk recklessly and make impossible demands. Those who do not agree with them are silent, and do not express their views of unwisdom of those so-called leaders. They are averse to joining these leaders; and the Government fails to attract them".<sup>4</sup>

Doubtless activated by the same motive, it was further suggested by the Imperial Government that, apart from the legislative councils, there should exist advisory councils at the centre and the provincial headquarters.

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1. See Morley Collection 1906-10, Vols 7-25

2. 'Frazer's Reply to Arundell Committee's proposals 25 March 1907', Letters: Morley: Vol-II, p.35.

3. Frazer to Minto 28 May 1907, Letters: Morley, Vol.12, p.3.

4. Frazer's reply to Arundell Committee's proposals 25 March 1907', Letters: Morley, Vol.2, pp. 35, 36.

It was advocated that both in the centre and the provinces the advisory councils should comprise the superior landholders as nuclei. In this way there would be formal political bodies of influential Indians who could provide the country and the Government with an alternative group with different ideas to the Congress.<sup>1</sup> The central body would meet once a year for approximately a fortnight in Calcutta. This would allow it to be in full view of what Minto considered the turbulent Bengali people. Minto informed Morley that Fraser "strongly agrees with me that the point we have to keep in view at present is the creation of an Imperial Council of Chiefs and great landowners to belong to which would be a marked Imperial distinction". On the other hand, the Lieut. Governor was doubtful whether he could find more than three or four in Bengal who would qualify for the esteemed position on the provincial advisory council. Moreover, leading noblemen such as Darbhanga (Bihar) informed him that they were able to express their opinions without restraint in private, but they would find it impossible to do so in public.<sup>2</sup> Appreciating their difficulties, the Bengal Government suggested that the provincial council should comprise about thirty members representing large and small landholders, feudatory states, European and Indian commerce, tea and indigo,

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1. Minto to Morley 28 May 1906, Letters: Morley, Vol. 6, pp. 75, 76.
  2. Minto to Morley 7 June 1907, Letters: Morley Vol. 12, pp. 22, 23.

the professions, the University, the district boards and municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed Council, being considered of little value by Morley and his associates and repetitive by people such as Fraser was dropped altogether. But the Viceroy insisted that, in the legislative councils at least, the influence of the "professional classes" should be diminished. It was pointed out that "the Government of India are far from denying that the professional classes are entitled to a share of representation ... But they are not prepared to allow them a virtual monopoly of the power exercised by the Councils, and they believe that the soundest solution of the problem is to be found in supplying the requisite counterpoise to their excessive influence by creating an additional electorate from the landed and the monied classes".<sup>2</sup> In Bengal that would signify giving the nobles an advantage by the backdoor over the so-called "Bengal agitators".

Doubtless, from his seat in remote London, Morley unlike the local officials, could not help being impressed by the most vocal group in far away India. The others, as Fraser pointed out, were relatively silent. It is not at all surprising that the Authorities in London should conclude that the leadership of the Indian people rested entirely in the hands of the leaders of the intelligentsia. They controlled most of the Indian owned

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1. 'Council Reforms 1908-09', Papers:Morley, Vol.33, p.7.

2. Circular from Govt.of India 24 Aug.1907',  
P. Mukherji: Indian Constitutional Documents Vol.I.  
pp.261,262.



newspapers and periodicals; they frequently called public meetings in the great cities; and members of their group constantly travelled to England which allowed their views to filter into the minds of the British public.

Moreover, since Morley was a Liberal, the liberal principles advocated by the leaders of the intelligentsia would undoubtedly find favourable reception with the Secretary of State. Indeed his position in England was analogous to that of the leaders of the intelligentsia in India. Being born without a title he lacked the advantages that peers acquired by the mere fact of being born in a noble household. Like the Indian nationalists, Morley's eminence was based on personal merit and diligence. He chose to join that political party in England which advocated the reduction of the status of the House of Lords. Despite this attitude of many English people in general, and Morley in particular, one must keep in mind that Great Britain had formally declared India to be beyond the spheres of party platforms. It is undeniable that, despite the declared policy, a difference of treatment by the Conservatives and the Liberals would exist. Yet it is safe to assume that the differences would not stretch beyond limits which would endanger the very existence of the Imperial Commonwealth. The terrorists would never be able to find support from either party. While looking around for reliable people in the ranks of the Indian leaders, the Liberal Authorities in London laid down a general directive by dividing the leadership

of the intelligentsia into the moderates and the extremists and placing their reliance on the former.

On the other hand, the local Authorities necessarily had to look beyond mere objectives. Their task was to supervise the day to day administration in the most effective manner. Coming in regular contact with the different sections of the community, they were not only better placed to understand the true situation in the country, but were also faced with the need to seek the most effective support available for the sake of smooth administration. They could better appreciate the factors enumerated in the previous chapters, despite their lack of notoriety. Elaborating on this point, Minto stated, "I can imagine a want of knowledge at home, an exaggerated idea of the value of Western forms of Government, and the eloquence of political agitators from the East, who could not hold their own for an instant in their own country, proving very dangerous to India... I am afraid of an assumption of too much authority by the House over questions at a distance, of which few people at home can possibly have any intimate knowledge - questions affected by conditions and sentiments unknown to English political life.<sup>1</sup>"

The local authorities were fully aware of the intelligentsia being primarily localised in the city and having very small influence over the other sections of the population other than the educated community.

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1. Minto to Morley 28 May 1906, Letters: Morley, Vol.8, p.75

Moreover, they were doubtless aware that apart from the extremists and the moderates there was the group of noblemen who did not even consider themselves as a part of the intelligentsia. As Fraser said, they were averse to joining their leaders. Yet because of their surface similarities, the latter two were frequently denominated together as the moderates by the Authorities in London.

Despite the attitude of some liberal leaders in London, most of the local officials continued to look with suspicion on the Indian moderates. This attitude was rooted in the conviction that the moderates were as bent on disruptive actions as the extremists. Moreover, they had taken up a rigid stance of opposition rather than remain content to be what were considered healthy critics of the Government. They appeared to be led by the popular tide rather than leading towards channels considered proper by the authorities. Suspicion became acute following the viceroyalty of Curzon. Their unreasonable demands, relentless opposition, and conciliatory attitude towards extremist pressures did little to contain the worsening law and order situation. On the contrary, it gave the extremists indirect impetus to indulge in further terrorism. Commenting on the Barisal agitation of 1906, Minto opined that, contrary to it being inspired by a patriotic spirit, it was "simply the work of agitators who feel themselves defeated and are bent on doing as much mischief as they can".<sup>1</sup> Surendranath Banerjea's activities

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1. Minto to Morley 5 Apr. 1906, Letters: Morley, Vol. 8, p. 31.

prompted Hardinge to opine that he "was a poisonous creature" who "must always have some agitation in progress".<sup>1</sup> In reference to the Congress, the Viceroy wrote that "though there are many honest men connected with the Congress movement, I cannot disguise from myself that we are every day being brought more face to face with absolutely disloyal intentions, the ultimate object of which is the overthrow of British administration. I know how serious these words are, but we must not blink the fact, and that the whole initiative emanates very largely from the so-called Bengalee agitation under cover of plausible arguments claiming to be put forward on behalf of popular demands".<sup>2</sup> Bending to extremist pressures even well known moderates such as Naoroji were forced to compromise.<sup>3</sup> It was so with Gokhale too. He startled Dunlop Smith by his uncompromising statement that "our standpoints are bound to be different" and that "we must be content to work on opposite sides".<sup>4</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, another moderate leader, while speaking to a German, "talked about the spilling of blood and said that the next time it happened ... the English will not have only a few mutinous sepoys to deal with, but the whole of the people of India". He further added that the only reason the moderates restrained the people for the moment was because the time for starting an armed insurrection was not quite ripe. Chaudhuri's unguarded

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1. H. Chakrabarti: 'Government & Bengal Terrorism', B.P. & P.: July-Dec.1971, p.166.
  2. Minto to Morley 1 Aug.1906, Letters: Morley, Vol.9 p.13.
  3. Minto to Morley (enclo) 16 Jan,1907, Letters: Morley, Vol.11, p.13.
  4. Dunlop Smith to Gokhale 5 Jan.1907, Letters: Morley, Vol.12, p.105.

remarks were incited by the lack of knowledge that the German was, in fact, a naturalised British citizen.<sup>1</sup>

Surendranath Banerjea once, quite frankly, confessed to Ronaldshay that newspapers in this country were obliged to attack the Government even in matters in which the editor or owner knew that the attack was unjustifiable, in order to retain their circulation.<sup>2</sup> Such behaviour hardened the attitude of the local officials towards the moderates.

Thus in India as a whole, and Bengal in particular, the local officials felt the need to form a counterpoise against the advocates of agitational politics: whether they were extremist<sup>3</sup> or moderates. Since there were already other influential status groups and communities in existence who distrusted the motives of the "denationalised" leaders as much as the British did, it was not difficult for the Administration to select them for the task. Minto wrote, "personally my object has been in the proposed reforms to secure the representation of landed proprietors, and of those who have a stake in the country", and of communal interests. Supported by his subordinates officials in India, he emphasised that the great landholders and the Muslims should be given special consideration as conservatives on whom the Administration could

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1. Minto to Morley (Enclo) 1 Aug.1906, Letters: Morley: Vol.9, p.14.

2. Bengal Diary Feb.1917-Nov.1919: Zetland, Vol.I., p.89.

3. Extremists like Tilak claimed in private that their aim was a confederacy of Indian provinces, possessing colonial self-government, with England retaining control over imperial questions and, simultaneously, in public stirred up the mass to a revolutionary pitch by the slogan 'Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it'. However, the extremists of Bengal, who were inspired by the Ghose brothers, regarded Tilak as touched with a sense of cautious moderation. - Nevinson: New Spirit in India, pp.72,221.

rely.<sup>1</sup> In Bengal the leadership of both groups rested in the hands of the nobles. Moreover, as mentioned before, they also dominated the Indian commercial community. Thus, it came to pass that the functions of the nobles in the legislative bodies - as leaders of the rural community, commercial or monied classes, and the Muslims - became the preservation of loyalty and conservatism in the council chamber. Their socio-economic functions and their activities as intermediaries in public affairs had been the product of natural evolution. But now, for the first time, the group found itself in a situation with a specific responsibility thrust on it by the Authorities.

Minto and his fellow officials were not gambling on a group who seemed devoid of any other experience than zamindari management. In a previous chapter it has already been explained that they were the inter-organisational leaders of the province, and were well experienced in political activities. Moreover, many of them had acquired experience in administrative work. Nawab Syed Mohammad Khan was a very popular Inspector General of Registration. During his term in office he thoroughly reorganised the whole department and introduced a number of useful and salutary reforms to improve its activities.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Nashipur was a commissioner of the Murshidabad Municipality. While its chairman, he tried to improve the sanitation of the town and supply it with

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1. J.H. Broomfield, p.37.

2. The Englishman: 1 Apr. 1912, p.8.

pure drinking water.<sup>1</sup> After his term in office, Maharaj Kumar Bhupendra Narayan Sinha was nominated to fill the vacancy thus created.<sup>2</sup> Abdur Rahman was considered a very able and impartial judge.<sup>3</sup> Nawabzada Abul Khair Abdus Sobhan was the Musalman Press Censor.<sup>4</sup> Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury was a very important member of the Kymen-singh District Board,<sup>5</sup> Raja Reshee Case Law was a Commissioner of the Calcutta Port Trust, a member of the Corporation of Calcutta, a member of the consulting committee of E.I and E.B Railways, first non-official chairman of 24 Parganas District Board, and first Indian Director of the Imperial Bank.<sup>6</sup> Nawab Khwaja Yousaff was a long standing member of the Dacca Municipality, and acted very effectively as its chairman.<sup>7</sup> Raja Dinendra Narayan Roy was a prominent member of the Calcutta Corporation.<sup>8</sup> Nawab Badruddin Haidar was one of the oldest commissioners of the Calcutta Corporation.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact most of the nobles of Bengal had experience of the sort enumerated above.

They also had definite ideas of the method of government best suited to India, giving the appearance of mature understanding of the country's needs. As mentioned in the

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1. D.C. Boulger: Maharaja Devi Sinha, p.122
  2. The Bengalee: 14 Aug. 1913, p.3
  3. Ind. N.P.: week ending 2 Dec. 1916, p.1610
  4. Ibid: week ending 4 March, 1916, p.333
  5. Nat. N.P. week ending 25 July, 1914 p.750
  6. Bengal Zamindars, p.69
  7. Chiefs, Nobles & Zamindars, p. 541
  8. Ind. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 24 Apr. 1915, p.1245
  9. The Bengalee: 11 July 1913, p.3

previous chapter, their slogan was "good government". Their conservative ideas may have gone against the views of many liberal Englishmen, but the liberals could not deny that the nobles were loyal to the Imperial Commonwealth.

The opinion of the Maharaja of Burdwan on the method of administration expected by the nobles of the Government well illustrated what they considered good government to be. He said that Indian administration was a sacred duty of England, and that it should never be brought on to the platform of party politics. It was the duty of the Government in India to direct the legitimate aspirations of the people of India into "safe and proper channels". Since India's rulers lived in the west and her Government was also a westernised one, she had to be, no doubt, westernised to a great extent. But to westernise her in entirety would be an act of gross folly. Change had to come in India as everywhere else in the world, but he asked the rulers never to hustle the East.<sup>1</sup> He was convinced that it was a major mistake to overdose a country like India with western ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>2</sup> The nobles believed that immediate rule by the people as understood in the west, without any supervisory control, was not feasible, since the country was not yet ripe for it.<sup>3</sup> If traditional institutions were ignored by Indian leaders as antiquated, because they were so in the west, and local background overlooked as unnecessary, it

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1. B.C. Mahtab: Impressions, pp.113,114.

2. Burdwan to Curzon 3 Aug.1911, Letters:Curzon, Vol.426, p.108.

3. Ranajit Sinha: Reforms in the Administration of India, p.vi.



would not only lead to loss of racial identification, but also prove impractical, since indigenous institutions served a definite purpose in the country. Democratic government, as it existed in the west, was bound to create a revolutionary situation.<sup>1</sup>

Territorial representation would mean that the legislature was dominated by the intelligentsia leaving too many other interests unrepresented or, at the most, represented by an outsider. Moreover, once the discontent had set in, the Government could expect no help from these "denationalised" leaders of the intelligentsia in combatting disruptive forces thus let loose.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we find the attitude of the nobles regarding the legislative and executive bodies best suited for the country, was quite different from that of the intelligentsia. The most glaring difference was that they did not accept the intelligentsia's conviction that the Indian councillors were to function in the same fashion as the opposition in the British Parliament. On the contrary, they advised that there should be no party politics. It was their duty as a body to guide the Government to direct the legitimate aspirations of the people into "safe and proper channels". The 1909 Act was worded in a manner that would make it possible for the nobles to justify their theories by putting them into

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1. Burdwan to Curzon 3 Aug. 1911, Letters: Curzon, Vol.426, p.109.

2. Nat.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 15 Apr.1911. p.165, (Tagore)

practice. It placed the burden of counter-acting the rapid swing of opinion towards rigid opposition squarely on their shoulders.

The reforms gave the nobles an exclusive place in the specially reserved seats of the landholders' constituencies. The franchise was bestowed on persons who held titles not lower in rank than that of raja or nawab. The idea underlying the concession was that these titleholders would ordinarily be men of local eminence and territorial influence.

The reforms gave them no less of an advantage in other constituencies as well. The requisite qualifications for elections from the municipalities and district boards were limited to the members within the bodies. In the mufassil the limitation rendered it almost impossible for an educated Hindu who had not sought election to local bodies to find his way into the legislative councils. Furthermore, the concession to the Muslims to choose their own nominees deprived the predominantly Hindu intelligentsia of some more seats in the chamber. It was similar in the case of the seat reserved for a nominated member representing the Indian commercial community. The Indian commercial community for all practical purposes was considered subordinate to the influence of the Law family.<sup>1</sup> That left the leaders of the intelligentsia the possibility of being returned only from the Corporation of Calcutta and the Calcutta University. But a closer analysis shows that even in the latter two places their

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1. Chief Sec.Beng. to Sec.Home Ind. 5 June 1911,  
B.A.P.: July 1911, Vol.8679. pp.34,38.

influence was thoroughly curtailed. Doubtless fifty percent of the members of the Calcutta Corporation were elected representatives of the ratepayers of Calcutta. But the fact remained that the other fifty percent were nominated by the Government, the chambers of commerce, the trade associations and other bodies. Similarly, though the University had a hundred Fellows, eighty of them were nominees.<sup>1</sup> Thus the leaders of the intelligentsia were hampered at every turn. The situation was made worse for them by the fact that, though they were barred from contesting the landholders' and the Muslim seats, the nobles and the Muslims were permitted to stand in the mixed constituencies.

Finding themselves in such unfavourable conditions, Surendranath Banerjea and his associates appealed to the Bengali community to boycott the forthcoming elections in the two provinces of divided Bengal. When the elections took place, it was found that only that section of the Bengali community which followed the lead of Surendranath Banerjea responded to the call for boycott.<sup>2</sup> The nobles and their fellow zamindars, as leaders of the rural population, the Muslim community and the commercial classes had ignored the appeal and participated in the election. In the Legislative Council of Eastern

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1. 'Report on Revision of Election Rules', Ibid: July, 1911, Vol.8679, p.19.

2. Chief Sec. Beng. to Sec. Home Ind. 5 June 1911, Ibid, pp.34,38.

Bengal and Assam nine noblemen found their way into the assembly, while five others took their seats in the Bengal Legislative Council. Moreover, Raja Kishori Lal Goswami was selected as the first Indian member in the Bengal Executive Council, and accepted the nomination without any protest.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the nobles, most of the other Indian non-officials were also their fellow landholders.<sup>2</sup>

Minto's expectations had been more than satisfied in Bengal. For the very first time the superior landholders had openly disassociated themselves from the "professional" politicians. In circumstances where no formal parties existed, it was as formal a break as possible. Moreover, they had counter-acted the boycott call, depriving it of the impact it could have had if the returned representatives had all been Europeans and officials, and the Administration had found no Indian non-official willing to serve in the Executive Council of Bengal.

At the outset there were some misgivings among officials that the nobles and other superior landholders would not participate in the elections, despite the advantages secured by Minto. It was possible that they would find stepping into the electoral arena embarrassing. Except for a handful, the electorate did not comprise fellow noblemen in the constituencies other than their own. Moreover, senior noblemen might have found

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1. India Office List, 1911, pp.45,55.

2. J.H. Broomfield, p.59.

it detrimental to their dignity even to stand for election in their own constituencies.

When the election actually took place, however, it came to light that such fears were quite unfounded. Leading noblemen such as the Maharaja of Burdwan, Kassimbazar and Nashipur came forward freely to contest the elections of their special representatives. The two former were particularly active in canvassing the voters and succeeded in getting themselves returned.<sup>1</sup> Landholders also achieved a high degree of success in the mixed electorates. Of the twelve members elected in the Bengal Legislative Council by municipalities and district boards, most were zamindars, of whom three were proprietors of large estates. Moreover, nobles who were thus elected were considered to be representatives in the best sense of the term of the returning bodies. According to the official record "many of them have rendered long and approved service as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of these institutions and are at the same time men of high local position and influence." The report cited Raja Kishori Lal Goswami and Raja Reshee Case Law as examples.<sup>2</sup>

The Maharaja of Burdwan's capacity for manipulating votes for himself quite startled the British officials of the time. In order to secure the votes of the Midnapur zamindars, he came to an electoral under-

1: Collin to Chief Sec. Beng. 29 March 1910, B.A.P.: Feb. 1911, Vol. 8679, p. 21

2. Chief Sec. Beng. to Sec. Home Ind. 5 June 1911, Ibid: July 1911, Vol. 8679, p. 31

standing with K.B. Dutt, the retained barrister-at-law of the Burdwan estate. Apart from being a trusted retainer of the Maharaja, he was also the legal adviser of various other zamindars of the locality. He was persuaded by the Maharaja to canvass votes for him, and in return the Maharaja agreed to exercise all the legitimate influence he could in favour of the candidature of the latter for the suffrage of the district boards in the Division. Since the District Board of Burdwan had chosen as its delegate Raja Ban Bihari Kapur, the Maharaja's own father, and exercised more votes than any other district boards, little difficulty was experienced in securing the election of K.B. Dutt. A similar reciprocal influence operated, though not so fully, in favour of the election of Raja Kishori Lal Goswami to represent the municipal boards. It resulted in Rai Bahadur Nalinaksha Basu, who had been elected by the same bodies to be a member of the former Bengal Council, only seven months earlier, not being able to secure a single vote.<sup>1</sup>

Having secured an entry into the legislative councils, the nobles and the zamindars managed almost to monopolise the proceedings of the assemblies. No other Indian voice, apart from the Muslim councillors, could be heard within the council chamber. Moreover, their fellow zamindar-nobleman, Raja Kishori Lal Goswami, was the Indian spokesman in the Executive Council of Bengal.

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1. Macpherson to Chief Sec.Beng. 9 Aug. 1910, Ibid: Feb. 1911, Vol.8679, p.46.

Amongst other portfolios, he was also appointed Member-in-charge of Education:<sup>1</sup> a field highly prized by the intelligentsia as their private preserve.

The nobles' conscious neglect to heed the boycott call and the Raja's accepting of office were thoroughly resented by the Indian press which reflected the views of the intelligentsia. The Nayak took umbrage and reported in 1911 that "the heat of the Bengali Councillor - a very small person in comparison with the real rulers of the country - is becoming unbearable to us. Government's secrets are leaking out, and those amongst us who are rich and frequently visit this councillor are creating all sorts of worthless stories which are in many cases defamatory and scandalous".<sup>2</sup> The Bharat Mitra went so far as to suggest that the entire Morley-Minto scheme was a failure because people like the Raja were appointed as Indian executive councillors. The paper maintained that people had no admiration for them since they were not familiar with the requirements and aspirations of the public. Even if they did have the necessary knowledge, they abused their authority by neglecting to represent the true desires of the people.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising to find the Indian press and the intelligentsia vindictive towards the group that had taken the wind out of the much publicised boycott call.

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1. The Englishman: 14 Jan. 1911, p.4.

2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 1 July, 1911, p.800.

3. Ibid.: week ending 1 Apr. 1911, p.345.

Doubtless the activities of the nobles and their fellow zamindars during the initial years of the Morley-Minto scheme would not be taken in docile resignation by the intelligentsia. The reforms had promised greater Indian participation in the councils. This was understood to mean the educated Indians. But when the scheme was put into effect it was found that the balance was in favour of the landlords. A measure so heavily in their favour inevitably caused a great deal of resentment among the Calcutta intelligentsia. They had been barred from competing in the landholders' constituencies, and, for all practical purposes, were unlikely to be able to compete with the nobles over the Muslim electorate as long as Eastern Bengal remained another province. The grievance was accentuated amongst the Hindu-dominated intelligentsia by the superior advantage accorded to the Muslims for seats in the council.<sup>1</sup>

It also had been made almost impossible for the intelligentsia to find a way into the Council through the local bodies. The regulations further failed to provide an opening for the educated Bengalis living in Calcutta proper, since he could not even stand as a candidate unless he happened to be a member of the Corporation or the University Senate. Thus the Hindu intelligentsia complained that their group as a whole in Calcutta were disfranchised by the Morley-Minto scheme as they were disqualified from sitting in Council.<sup>2</sup> They refused to accept the explanation that Calcutta

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1. see Appendix IV. for their respective qualifications.

2. Chief Sec. Beng. to Sec. Home Ind, 5 June 1911, B.A.P.: July 1911, Vol. 8679, p. 34.



was partially represented by other agencies such as the Trades Association, Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Indian commercial community, and the Muslim community, besides the Calcutta Corporation and the University.<sup>1</sup> The Calcutta intelligentsia indignantly protested that "wealth and ignorance are the only things thought worthy of representation".<sup>2</sup>

Pressure was brought upon the Government to revise these apparently unfair regulations. This resulted in the formation of a committee to revise the regulations for elections to the Legislative Council. But still the local officials attempted to keep the scales tipped in favour of the landholders. Out of the ten Bengali representatives selected for the committee, six were noblemen.<sup>3</sup> It was left to Bhupendranath Basu and Dr. Rash Bihari Ghose to voice the claims of the Calcutta intelligentsia.

During their first sitting, Bhupendranath Basu suggested that Calcutta should have two representatives, one of which should be for the educated Bengalis.<sup>4</sup> The second should be for the "well-to-do" residents, based on payment of a high consolidated rate or income tax. Nawab Serajul Islam agreed with these suggestions, but Nawab Badruddin Haider put forward a counter proposal by suggesting that the two seats recommended by

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1. 'Commission on Revision of Election Rules' Ibid pp.18,10
  2. Carmichael to Crewe 25 Sept. 1912, Letters Carmichael: Crewe, Box C/6.
  3. Kishori Lal Goswami, Shamsul Huda, Burdwan, Law, Serajul Islam, Badruddin Haider.
  4. Registered voters of 5 years standing residing at Cal., lawyers of ten years standing, medical men of 5 years standing, engineers duly qualified residing in Cal., professors of private colleges & journalists.

Bhupendranath Basu should remain confined to the Calcutta Corporation, however, elected separately by the nominated and elected members. Raja Reshee Case Law tried to bring about a compromise between the two opposing suggestions by recommending that the Government should give up two nominated seats for the purpose. Raja Kishori Lal Goswami, as an Executive Councillor, promptly grasped the opening presented by Raja Reshee Case Law, before there ensued a complete deadlock. The Raja pointed out on behalf of the Executive Authority that it was impossible for the Government to give up two seats, and advised that the demand should be reduced to only one seat. Except for Nawab Serajul Islam, the noblemen were apparently still attempting to restrict the influence of the intelligentsia.

From an examination of the proceedings of the second day, however, there emerges a picture of confused attitudes on the part of the nobles. Bhupendranath Basu, after consulting his associates, indicated that one seat would be regarded as adequate, provided that the constituency was sufficiently restricted in favour of the educated population.<sup>1</sup> To make that doubly sure it was proposed that the wealth requirements necessary to allow a person to vote or stand for office should be considerably lowered. By this the leader tried to ensure that the electorate was further

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1 Graduates of 10 years standing and residing in Calcutta for not less than twelve months, lawyers above the class of mukhtiars and revenue agents of five years standing, and medical men and engineers of five years standing, and editors of 1 year standing of papers of 5 years standing.

expanded numerically yet confined to the educated population; this would make it practically impossible for the nobles to compete against them in the city. This fact is made clear by a reply of Bhupendranath Basu to a question put by the President. He said that he had deliberately excluded the propertied people, since to do otherwise would be to cause the electorate to be swamped. In other words it was to prevent a person like the Maharaja of Burdwan, who was actually resident in Burdwan, from standing for election in Calcutta, which he otherwise could do on the grounds that he had valuable house properties there. By such a manoeuvring the educated population could easily be deprived of true representation. After discussion on the last point, Dr. Rash Bihari Ghose and Bhupendranath Basu agreed with the Maharaja of Burdwan and Raja Reshee Case Law that the property qualification should be lowered to a certain extent, but both the nobles appear to have conceded the point that being "well-to-do" by itself was not a sufficient reason to allow a person to vote in that constituency.

Later the crucial point that affected the nobles and other "well-to-do" persons directly was deliberated upon. The question was then put to the vote as to whether representatives should be confined to the educated or whether the "well-to-do" having no formal education should also be allotted a seat. Surprisingly enough the former proposal was

carried by eleven to nine. Rajas Reshee Case Law and Kishori Lal Goswami, the Maharaja of Burdwan and Nawab Serajul Islam voted for its rejection, while only Nawab Badruddin Haidar voted along with the British and the officials for its retention. Nawab Shamsul Huda abstained from casting his vote. Apparently the nobles were conceding points which would deprive them of their exclusiveness on which they based a great deal of their prestige.

Similar contradictory attitudes were noticeable on other issues. The advice of the Committee was sought on whether Knight Companion as a title of any order created by the Crown, and of Knight Bachelor, be included in the electoral list in the Landholders constituencies, as long as the titles were no lower than those of Raja and Nawab. The Maharaja of Burdwan strongly opposed the principle. He maintained that "knights should have the power of voting if they were landholders as well, but not otherwise. The general idea under-lying Indian titles was that they implied ownership of lands". The British titles on the other hand did not necessarily follow the same principle. The members, with special emphasis by Raja Reshee Case Law, generally supported this view.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, when it came to extending the franchise to zamindars, other than the nobles, they apparently acquiesced, since the point was carried. Thus the requisite qualifications became the

1. 'Commission on Revision of Election Rules', B.A.P.: July 1911, Vol. 8679, pp. 18-22, 25, 28.

holding of certain titles or the payment by zamindars of land revenue or road cess of a certain minimum sum.<sup>1</sup>

Although the constituencies remained the exclusive preserve of the superior landholders, they were no longer confined only to the nobles.

A proposal to include patnidars and talukdars in the landholders electorate coincided with the sitting of the committee. Raja Kishori Lal Goswami had pointed out in the Executive Council that in certain parts of the province, permanent tenure holders, in spite of not paying land revenue to the Government, had attained considerable importance. But the recommendation was rejected by the Lieut. Governor, on the grounds that, when the rules were originally formed, eminent landholders of the province were consulted,<sup>2</sup> and showed unwillingness to enter into the political arena with their subordinates. At the time they were unanimously against the proposal with the exception of Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee who alone urged that the system would be unsatisfactory which excluded the major patnidars. Thus the Lieut. Governor pointed out to his executive councillors "the facts show clearly that the great zamindars of Bengal to whom it is particularly sought to give a substantial representation are as a body altogether opposed to the inclusion of tenure holders." <sup>3</sup>

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1. See Appendix IV.

2. Burdwan, Girdhaur, Tagore, Kassimbazar, Nashipur, Balasore, Sovabazar, Kakina, Peary Mohan Mukerjee, Kristo Das Law.

3. Chief Sec. Beng. to Sec. Home Ind. 5 June 1911, B.A.P.: July 1911, Vol. 8679, pp. 38, 39.

The discussions on the revision of election rules bring to light an aspect of the nobles' attitude hitherto unknown. In their behaviour pattern, in their functions as socio-economic leaders of the province, and in their activities as inter-organisational intermediaries in public affairs, they had exhibited a cohesive and uniform attitude, with marginal differences. But as councillors, both legislative and executive, they appeared to be unable to combine into a single group. At the outset, when they unanimously decided against the boycott call, they gave the impression that they would justify Minto's reliance by becoming an effective counterpoise against the rising influence of the intelligentsia. With that hope, the local officials continued to create as many advantages as possible for them. But at the Committee of Revision of Election Rules, the nobles showed symptoms of confusion instead. Knowing that their leadership was built on patriarchal influence, they had made it a policy to remain as exclusive as possible. Instead of putting up a united front to retain that exclusiveness, they allowed the opportunity to pass, going their individual ways. When the question of extending the franchise to tenure holders was brought up, a senior nobleman such as Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee, unlike other large landholders, dissented, and suggested that the doors should be open to them. Later the point was again raised in the Executive Council, not by the officials but by Raja Kishori Lal Goswami. Similarly, the nobles who were in the majority in the Rules

Revision Committee, conceded that the franchise in the landholders' constituency should be extended to other landholders apart from themselves, reducing the qualification from a status to an economic basis. The Maharaja of Burdwan voted in favour of extending the franchise when he had great doubts of its value.<sup>1</sup>

They were even unable to close their ranks regarding the question of the mixed constituencies. Nawab Serajul Islam and Raja Reshee Case Law quite willingly accepted Bhupendranath Basu's proposal to extend the franchise, and Raja Kishori Lal Goswami differed only in the number of nominated seats the government was to relinquish for the move. There is no doubt that they were not working in unison. On the second day of the proceedings Bhupendranath Basu's reply to the President had all the colouring of a subtle attack on the landholders residing in Calcutta. The only objection raised by the Maharaja of Burdwan and Raja Reshee Case Law was that the property qualification should be raised to the payment of a higher rate. Moreover, when the question of the exclusion of the "well-to-do" people without educational qualifications was carried, the only opponent was Nawab Badruddin Haidar. We are aware that they did not hold formal education in much esteem, and senior noblemen, like the Maharaja of Burdwan, Raja of Sovabazar, and Nawab Mohammad Ali Chaudhuri did not have a formal education in the form expressed in the recommendation.

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1. Burdwan to Curzon 6 Jan. 1909, Letters: Curzon, Vol.426, p.84.

There were two fundamental reasons for this confusion that prevailed in their ranks. The first was their opposition to party politics which deprived them of the use of the party whip to keep the group in line. The second and more important reason was obviously motivated by the changing circumstances in the political life of the time. A sense of fear that, in spite of their obvious loyalty, the British were beginning to rely more on the moderate leaders of the intelligentsia, had begun to take root in their minds. They sensed that, when the time came, the support of the local officials would not be able to prevent the pressure of the liberals from London. The Maharaja of Burdwan expressed this doubt in a private letter to Curzon when he stated that, viewing the treatment of the British nobility by the Liberal Government in England, he worried about "what will be the fate of our limited miserable community of aristocrats out here."<sup>1</sup> He later publicly warned his fellow landholders in the Legislative Council that they must remember that the zamindars were on trial.<sup>2</sup> It was not easy to retain their position in a small constituted body which so easily drew the attention of liberal officials in London without being condemned as a reactionary force. It was essential to show a liberal attitude in the quasi-parliamentary institutions, or face the danger of being forced into oblivion. But

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1. Burdwan to Curzon 3 Aug. 1911, Letters: Curzon, Vol.426, p.2.

2. 'Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill 1917', B.L.C.D.: 1918, p.57.



instead of achieving that end, all that they did was to lose their outer semblance of unity, and put themselves in a position where they would be forced to compete with others on equal level. Under the circumstances they would not be able to remain depersonalised or exclusive for long.

Thus the Bengali intelligentsia found a number of openings and, along with the revocation of the partition being announced, declared their willingness to contest the forthcoming elections. Their leaders went into the contest full of confidence and sure of victory. All the factors pointed to their being able to capture a majority of the seats in the Legislative Council. The two groups thus created could be readily identified. The political group led by Banerjea could be recognised as the educated, westernised elite. All its members were graduates of the Calcutta University and a few had even received a higher education in England. They were professional men from various parts of the province. All had won reputations for their opposition to the partition and their agitation for constitutional concessions.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the nobles and their fellow zamindars, as Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee pointed out, found no charm in formal education. "He looks upon it in open scorn as a thing by which humbler people got their bread. He has hardly any regard for men without title and a long pedigree,

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1. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power', J.A.S.:  
Feb. 1962, p.164

however great their natural gifts and acquirements may be."<sup>1</sup> Thus for the first time the two groups took to the field primarily as opponents and the conflict for leadership, which was to last throughout the decade, intensified.

At the beginning the nobles proved to be the more powerful. They exercised their full influence to contest the elections. The Maharaja of Burdwan tried for the landholders seat for Burdwan Division. As the proprietor of the largest zamindari in British India, he was a formidable candidate. Nobody came forward to challenge his claim, leaving him uncontested throughout the election. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar changed his mind and withdrew his candidature for the landholders electorate from the Presidency Division on behalf of Byomkesh Chakrabarti, because he decided to contest the seat for the Supreme Council instead.<sup>2</sup> Byomkesh Chakrabarti, the Secretary of the Bengal Landholders Association, which was presided over by the Maharaja of Kassimbazar, was returned to the Legislative Council.<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Natore stood for the landholders seat from the Rajshahi Division and did not have any difficulty in being returned.<sup>4</sup> The Maharaja of Susang proposed the Raja of Santosh for the landholders constituency of Dacca Division.<sup>5</sup> It was rumoured that Benode Kumar Roy Chaudhury, another aspirant, would step aside for

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1. B.I.A. p. 143 ..

2. The Bengalee: 14 Dec. 1912, p.2.

3. India Office List: 1913, p.44.

4. The Bengalee: 25 Dec. 1912, p.2.

5. Ibid: 6 Dec. 1912, p.2.

the Raja, giving him a clear way for the seat. Later, the rumour was denied and the votes were divided, endangering the chances of the Raja. At this stage the Maharaja of Mymensingh entered the contest. Being far more influential in the locality than any other candidate, his entry made it practically impossible for any non-noble candidate to win. The Maharaja's return was further assured by the fact that the Nawab of Dacca proposed his candidature.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the landholders' constituencies, the nobles also took a keen interest in the elections of their community representatives. Nawab Syed Hossain Haider stood for the Chittagong Division and was elected comfortably.<sup>2</sup> The Nawab of Dacca nominated and assured the return of Fazlul Haq to the Council.<sup>3</sup> Nawab Abdul Jabbar nominated Maulvi Abul Kasem from the Burdwan Division who was also successful in securing a seat in the Legislature.<sup>4</sup> But all was not smooth for the nawabs any more. A large section of the Muslims were losing their trust in the conservative approach of the nawabs towards the British Authorities. As far as they were concerned, the Hindu-dominated intelligentsia had proven that agitational politics paid off much more than the approach so far advocated by the nawabs, by forcing the revocation of the partition. Thus the 1912 elections found the nawabs with a feeblar grip on the Muslim community than previously. Its effect came to

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1. The Englishman: 23 Dec. 1912, p.4.

2. Ibid: 14 Jan. 1913, p.10.

3. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power', J.A.S.: Feb.1962, p.176.

4. The Bengalee: 14 Dec. 1912, p.1.

light in the Muslim constituencies of the other two divisions. The Nawab of Bogra's nominee, K. Ahmed,<sup>1</sup> lost the contest to the reactionary Muslim, Musherraf Hussain in the Rajshahi Division.<sup>2</sup> Similar was the case of A. Rasul on whose behalf Nawab Badruddin Haidar withdrew from the contest in the Presidency Division.<sup>3</sup> However, if he had not done so, there might have been a better chance of defeating the reactionary Golam Hossain Cassim Arif.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the mixed electorates that the nobles actually came into bitter conflicts with the leaders of the intelligentsia. In the other spheres the hold of the nobles was still too powerful. To weaken this hold of the nobles in the mixed constituencies, their opponents began to present the view that they were the exclusive constituencies for the "educated middle class", and that the nobles had no business to enter the contest against them.<sup>5</sup> Abul Kassem, in a letter published in the Bengalee, condemned the Maharaja of Dighapatia for standing for the District Board from Rajshahi Division. The reasons he gave were that in the last election the Maharaja had not stood aloof "like a patriot" and had gone "against public opinion". Moreover, he was "encroaching on middle classes' preserve".<sup>6</sup> As far as they were concerned, the activities of the nobles

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1. Ibid: 6 Dec. 1912, p.2.

2. The Englishman: 14 Jan. 1913, p.10.

3. The Bengalee: 15 Dec. 1912, p.1.

4. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power', J.A.S.: Feb. 1962, p.176.

5. The Bengalee: 10 Dec. 1912, p.3.

6. Ibid: 28 Nov. 1912, p.7.

should cease without actual participation in the elections. They should stop at the stage that the Maharajas of Natore and Dighapatia did while sponsoring the election of Kishori Mohan Chaudhury for the Rajshahi Division Municipality seat: call on the people to vote for their nominee and not enter the contest themselves.<sup>1</sup> The newspaper The Bengalee, even went to the extent of appealing to Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury to step down on behalf of Ambica Charan Majumdar so that the latter could feel safe to stand for the Dacca Division district board instead of the municipalities, allowing another "nationalist" to stand for the latter. The newspaper argued that in this way the Nawab would prevent a "national calamity".<sup>2</sup> This was a strange request to make of a Muslim nobleman on behalf of an anti-partitionist Hindu leader! The Nawab ignored the request and refused to withdraw.

Group differences and the struggle for leadership led to an embarrassing situation in the election for the Presidency Division district boards. Jadunath Majumdar, a prominent personality of the locality, had proposed the name of the Maharaja of Nashipur for the seat. Later on such pressure was brought to bear on Jadunath Majumdar that he was persuaded to offer himself for election against the very person he had proposed. It was concluded that it was absolutely necessary to keep the nobles out of the

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1. Ibid: 6 Aug. 1912, p.4.

2. Ibid: 14 Dec. 1912, p.5.

"middle classes' preserve".<sup>1</sup> Only by constant attempt to keep the nobles out of the Council could the leaders of the intelligentsia hope to wrest the leadership of the Bengal society away from them. In this case the attempt failed and the Maharaja was returned to the Council.<sup>2</sup>

The contest that attracted the greatest attention was between Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri and the Raja of Kakina for the Rajshahi Division district boards. A great deal of prestige was involved since Jogesh Chandra was the son-in-law of Surendranath Banerjea. At an early date Abul Kassem tried very hard to discredit the Raja. His attempts were counteracted by the Raja's followers, and a letter was published in the Bengalee stating that "the Raja is neither a mere theorist nor a follower of political 'shibboleth' but is a practical worker in the field which has been amply shown by his holding the balance equally between his Hindu and Mahomedan tenants during the most critical period of our recent history".<sup>3</sup> It was important to assert an anti-communal colouring, since a majority of the Division's population was Muslim.<sup>4</sup> Hoping to win the Muslim votes Jogesh Chandra persuaded two Muslims to propose and second his nomination. His selection of the seconder was unwise. He proved to be the chief electoral agent of the Raja of Kakina, and instead did

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1. Ibid: 10 Dec. 1912, p.3.

2. India Office List: 1914, p.44.

3. The Bengalee: 5 Dec. 1912, p.2.

4. Census (India): 1911, Vol.5, p.257.

his best to wreck Jogesh Chandra's chances. Moreover, to add to his weight the Nawab of Dacca gave him public support. The Raja was ultimately elected.<sup>1</sup>

It was only Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury who managed to get elected by the Dacca Division district board without much difficulty.<sup>2</sup>

The election for the seat allotted to the Corporation of Calcutta was also rather keenly contested by Radhacharan Pal and Nawab Badruddin Haider. The Nawab had been returned unopposed for twenty seven years from the Ward Koluttolla. It was one of the biggest Wards in the city and was inhabited not only by Muslims but also by a preponderating number of Hindu ratepayers.<sup>3</sup> After a rigorous contest Radhacharan Pal was eventually elected by seventeen votes as opposed to twelve for the Nawab.<sup>4</sup>

In these elections there were no formal parties. Individual position in the locality, influence over the electorate, and manipulation by the contestants to secure votes was what ultimately counted. Emanuddin, the election agent of the Raja of Kakina, assured his victory over Jogesh Chandra by informing the voters that the Rajshahi District Magistrate was opposed to the latter's candidature, and that his wrath would be felt by anyone who voted for him. Moreover, he spent Rs.2,000 on inducements, offered travelling

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1. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power', J.A.S.: Feb. 1962, p.174.

2. The Englishman: 14 Jan. 1913, p. 10.

3. The Bengalee: 11 July, 1913, p.3.

4. Ibid: 18 Dec. 1912, p.5.

expenses to many and entertained those who came to cast their votes on a scale they had never before experienced. He further let it be known that the Raja was willing to pay off the local Muhammadan Association's debt of Rs.1,500. A.Rasul, the nominee of Nawab Badruddin Haidar, was also defeated by parallel means. The biggest mistake of the Nawab was in deciding to give his support in a Muslim constituency to not only a friend of Surendranath Banerjea but also a Muslim who had taken an English wife.<sup>1</sup> Ariff, the opposing candidate, spread the rumour that Rasul was not a good Muslim, insinuating that he would sabotage Muslim interests when the time came to defend the rights of the community. He also had a number of Rasul's graduate friends warned that the Government was angered at the support Rasul was receiving and that there would be no further hope of official employment for any who voted for him. During the election, Ariff entertained all those who came to cast their votes. Moreover, he distributed travelling expenses and promised large sums for the construction and maintenance of Muslim institutions in many parts of the Division.<sup>2</sup> Under circumstances where local influence counted to such an extent, the nobles and their fellow landholders were at an advantage.

The results of the elections turned out to be totally unexpected for the followers of Surendranath

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1. Risley to Smith 21 May 1906, Letters: Morley, Vol.8, p.72.

2. J.H. Broomfield: 'Vote & Transfer of Power', J.A.S.: Feb. 1962, pp.174,176.



Banerjea. Only three of his immediate followers were elected to the Legislative Council.<sup>1</sup> The rest were from the landholders' community.

Moreover, out of the four Bnegalis nominated as non-official members by the Governor, two were Raja Reshee Case Law and the Nawab of Dacca. The former was an obvious choice to represent the interests of the Indian commercial community. But the latter caused some surprise in official circles since the Nawab was practically a permanent invalid by this time. The choice which was made was based on the prevailing political mood in Bengal. Carmichael's greatest initial problem was with the Muslims. Due to the reunification of Bengal, many of the younger Muslims were convinced that after this betrayal there could be no question of maintaining the old loyalist stance. Others, equally angry, were determined to make the British pay for their action. Under the circumstances, the Authorities felt that the Nawab was the one person who could be expected to hold a reasonable balance between the different factions in the Muslim community.<sup>2</sup> Some, like Carlyle, even felt that he was the only hope for preventing a disastrous situation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, although the Nawab made no secret to the Governor that "the events that brought him to Bengal were not such as the Nawab Bahadur could welcome in his own personal interest,"<sup>4</sup>

1. Ibid: p.166.

2. J.H. Broomfield, pp.49,50.

3. Carlyle to Hardinge 28 Dec. 1911, C.P.I.: 1911, Vol.Va6, pt.I, p.541

4. The Bengalee: 20 Jan. 1915, p.4.

Carmichael still chose him for his Legislative Council. Explaining his move to the Viceroy, Carmichael wrote, "I have put the Nawab of Dacca into one of the seats for which I might have nominated an official... The Nawab is still very ill, and is also very hard up, and may, I am told, find it difficult to come to Calcutta; still the possibility of his attending may have a good effect. Some of the new Mahommedan members are said not to be over-scrupulous".<sup>1</sup> The Hindoo Patriot commented in appreciation of the Governor's choice, since "the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca was bound to come in, for no Legislative Council for Bengal would be complete without the uncrowned king of Mahommadans of East Bengal."<sup>2</sup>

The position of the nobles in the councils was further strengthened by the announcement of the new Indian Executive Councillor designate. The office was offered to the Nawab Shamsul Huda. Apparently the choice dissatisfied the Hindu dominated intelligentsia even more than the selection of Raja Kishori Lal Goswami for the previous Council. The very same newspapers which had voiced displeasure at his choice began a chorus of support for his retention. The Bengalee questioned the decision to change the Raja for the Nawab on the ground that the Governor had stated that "Raja Kishori Lal had fully justified his selection as the

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1. Carmichael to Hardinge 3 Feb. 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol.Va9, pt.I. pp.42,43.

2. Nat.owned Eng.N.P.:week ending 1 Feb. 1913, p.83.

first Indian member of the Bengal Executive Council." <sup>1</sup>

The Samay alleged that "Sir Edward Baker and Sir William Duke were strongly in favour of his being retained in consideration of the great ability shown by him in the discharge of his duties".<sup>2</sup> The Bharat Mitra, supporting the same demand, further showed surprise that the Raja should be replaced by the Nawab, the President of the Moslem League. The Ananda Bazar Patrika stated that "the supercession of Raja Kishori Lal by Mr. Huda has displeased the Hindus...".<sup>3</sup> The Indian Empire verged on libel by printing that the Nawab "is a prominent anti-Hindu Muslim and notes his appointment with concern."<sup>4</sup> The Hitavadi summed up the resentment of the educated Bengali Hindus when it stated, "that his replacement by a Muslim is a sop to Muslims to allay the discontent among them caused by the undoing of partition".<sup>5</sup> Even the Nayak, which so bitterly criticised the Raja previously, changed its tone and stated that "although a Zamindar he had done his work very well".<sup>6</sup> Later on the same newspaper wrote in a mood of despair, "What has the Raja done to deserve this. Is this being done merely to please Eastern Bengal Muslims?" <sup>7</sup>

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1. Ibid: week ending 13 Apr. 1912, p.237.

2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 13 Apr. 1912, p.409.

3. Ibid: week ending 17 Feb. 1912, pp.210,211.

4. Nat. owned Eng.R.P.: week ending 17 Feb 1912, p.125.

5. Nat.N.P.: week ending 9 March 1912, p.286.

6. Ibid: week ending 13 Jan. 1912, p.41

7. Ibid: week ending 3 Feb. 1912, p.150.

In spite of the disappointment of the Hindu press, Carmichael appointed Nawab Shamsul Huda as his Executive Councillor. Unlike many of his fellow noblemen, the Nawab did not rely totally on his family background, for he was also a well qualified Barrister-at-Law who had risen high in the legal profession by his personal merit. His aim had been to be a judge of the High Court, and he had already been recommended for the Bench by the late Chief Justice and the Acting Lieut. Governor of Bengal. "It was because Hardinge asked him to act as the first Indian member of the Executive Council in Bengal, and because he felt that it was his duty - especially to his fellow Moslems - to do so when asked, that Sir Syid agreed not to take the Judgeship with its advantages of a secured position for a considerable term of years and the prospect of a pension, in order to act for 5 years on my Executive Council", explained Carmichael.<sup>1</sup>

The Nawab's first task was to assure the public that his intentions were not limited by Muslim communal spirit as had been insinuated by the Indian press. Shortly after his appointment, the Nawab made a speech at Darjeeling where he expressed his ideas and programme of work. He stated, " I shall never forget that I am not the Mahomedan Member of His Excellency's Council but its Indian Member and as such it is my duty to serve equally the interests of the Hindus and the Mahomedans. I shall, however, be perfectly frank with you and I would add to what I have said that I shall never purchase a reputation

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1. Carmichael to Chamberlain 28 June 1916, Governors Letters: 1915-17, p.175

for impartiality by sacrificing the interests of my community and I am certain none of you would wish me to do so. But you may be perfectly sure that whatever I may do to advance the interests of my community in any particular matter I shall always be prepared to do exactly the same thing with reference to other communities when they are similarly placed."<sup>1</sup> The question that arises is whether the Nawab proved worthy of his promises of being the spokesman of Indian interests, the guardian of Muslim interests when necessary, and the protector of interests of other similarly placed under-privileged communities, and simultaneously whether he succeeded in keeping in view the fact that he was a member of the corporate Executive Council: a body collectively responsible to the Crown, rather than to the people.

The Nawab's first major task as the Indian representative on the Executive Council arose with the discussion on the Public Service Commission. Disagreeing with the views of his fellow Councillors regarding the practice of recruiting young and inexperienced Civil Servants for the Judicial Branch of the Indian Civil Service, he signed a note of dissent. He disagreed with the process of calling men without any special legal training to fill the posts of District and Session Judges. He suggested that they should be, as

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1. The Bengalee: 4 July 1912, p.2.

far as practicable, appointed from the Bar. He knew that there existed a large number of Indians perfectly competent to fill the posts, and he emphasised that his recommendation would allow many more Indians to participate.<sup>1</sup> Apparently he was not one to quietly affix his signature as a mere cypher when Indian interests were at stake. From this it follows that it is an incorrect belief that Nawab Shamsul Huda did not stand up for Indian interests. Presumably the misconception arises because, unlike the nationalists, he did not stand against the British with the demand for self-government. His belief, like most of the other nobles, was that Indian interests would not be served by self-government, since that would only help to create what Maharaja Tagore described as the "vakilraj".

With the intention of serving Indian interests, the Nawab recommended that in any future reform schemes, self-government should not necessarily be aimed for, rather that more openings should be created for Indians and further incentives given to them. The goal of British rule in India should be the general public's happiness which could only be secured by material prosperity. He believed that the existing discontent in Bengal was mainly due to economic causes and not because

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1. S. Moore to Asst. Sec. Royal Commission Public Service  
19 Apr. 1913, B.A.P.: Sept. 1913, Vol. 9133, p. 27.

of the lack of self-government, as many suggested. The answer was to make the Indians economically strong rather than simply introduce political reforms. The latter would help only to satisfy a handful of Indians involved in a power struggle with the British. The extension of India's trades and commerce and the protection and development of her industries were much more important than the means of securing India's prosperity than conceding to boycott and opposition, he maintained.

Despite his disagreement with the demands of the intelligentsia the Nawab did not overlook the needs of the educated community. It has already been noted that he stood firm on his belief that the district and session judges should be Indianised. Moreover, for the educated community's benefit, he suggested that there should be more responsible employment of Indians under the Government. The first step must, therefore, be further improvement of education in all its stages. He clarified that he did not mean literary education alone but also scientific and technical education which gave expert knowledge. The absence of such qualified knowledge was the justification for filling most of the higher posts in departments of engineering, medicine, forest, agriculture by men imported from England. In order to secure these ends, it would be necessary to establish quality educational institutions as well as to create a new educational atmosphere in entirely

new surroundings.<sup>1</sup> According to the Nawab, this was the best way to strive towards political maturity, rather than by either further extending the Legislative Council and increasing the Indian element in the Executive Council, or by introducing self-government. How far the Nawab's efforts and recommendations affected the decisions arrived at in London is impossible to assess since questions connected with the Public Service Commission, and the Post War Reforms were of all India importance. The Nawab's recommendations were some of many that the officials in London considered before formulating the post war reforms.

What is possible to assert is that, keeping the above principle in mind, the Nawab played an important role in the appointment of an Indian Advocate General in the place of a British one. Kenrick was mismanaging the delicate situation created by the numerous cases involving the terrorists. The Nawab advised the Governor that it would be better if he was replaced by an Indian such as S.P. Sinha.<sup>2</sup> Soon after, Sinha replaced Kenrick as the Advocate General.

The Nawab also fulfilled his promise to look after the interests of his own community. The Muslims greatly resented the abolition of the post of Assistant Inspector of Schools of Muhammadan Education in the Presidency and Burdwan Divisions. Under his persuasion the

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1. Carmichael to Chelmsford 20 Aug. 1916, (enclo)  
G.B.R. p.136.

2. Carmichael to Hardinge 8 May 1914, C.P.I.: 1914,  
Vol. Va. 11, pt.1, p.339



Government later revoked the order permitting the Nawab to assure the community on behalf of the Government at a meeting of the Legislative Council that the posts would be restored. The Mussalman highly praised the Nawab for the step.<sup>1</sup> Later when a crisis took place, due to the delay at implementing the proposed Muslim Arts College at Calcutta, the Nawab promptly intervened and brought the situation under control.<sup>2</sup> He also acted as a spokesman for the Dacca Madrassa which urgently required funds.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from keeping a vigil over the Muslim institutions, the Nawab continuously tried to demonstrate to the Authorities that the Muslim community was underprivileged and required special treatment. He advocated the representation of the Muslims in the Legislative Council be put on a more logical basis than had been enacted in the 1909 Act. They had been given the right to select their representatives upon a separate Register and had at the same time been allowed to vote in the mixed constituencies. The Hindus considered that favouritism; the more so since the difference in voting qualifications between the two communities seemed inconsistent. Since numerically both were on a par, the Nawab recommended that the disparity should be removed by dividing the "popular electorate" into eight territorial divisions with one Hindu and one

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1. Ind.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 18 Apr.1914, p.253

2. Ibid., week ending 24 Apr. 1915, p.248.

3. Nat.N.P.: week ending 3 May 1913, p 310.

Muslim being returned from each.<sup>1</sup> If his recommendation had been acted upon, it would have foiled the argument that the Hindus were being unfairly treated. The Muslims then would have been guaranteed eight representatives instead of five, with the intelligentsia finding a very strong counterpoise against them since the two would be put on equal levels. Thus he took the intelligentsia's arguments and subtly used them to benefit the Muslim community. If his advice had been put into effect, there would have doubtless been great consternation in the ranks of the intelligentsia.

Although the Nawab tried to better the prospects of the Muslims, he never lost sight of the fact that he was an officer of the Crown. His presence in the Executive Council was proved beneficial to the Government when the Turko-British relationship began to deteriorate. Realising the explosive situation, the Nawab did not hesitate to advise the Governor to take exceptional measures against individuals if necessary.<sup>2</sup> He kept in constant touch with the leading Muslims of the province, keeping a day to day vigil over the developing situation.<sup>3</sup> As the situation further deteriorated, the Nawab felt more and more anxious. He kept in daily touch with the Governor in order to allow Carmichael to hear his views. He pointed out to the Governor that the tension was caused

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1. Carmichael to Chelmsford (enclo) 20 Aug. 1916, G.B.R., pp.141,146.

2. Carmichael to Hardinge 21 Apr. 1914, C.P.I.: 1914, Vol.Vall, pt.I. p.306.

3. Carmichael to Hardinge 26 Aug. 1914, Ibid : Vol.Val2, pt.II, p.140.

not only by the emotional ties with Turkey but also by the economic hardships faced by hundreds of Muslims who had been left unemployed due to the closure of the German hide trade, and he recommended immediate action.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as the political climate continued to worsen, he recommended the need for carefully directing public opinion. For this he suggested subsidising the newspaper Moslem Hitaishi to put forth the Government viewpoint and the appointment of two leader-writers in Bengali and Urdu employed under his private direction.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, under his direction a special Muslim Censor, Nawabzaba A.K.S. Sobhan, was appointed.<sup>3</sup> Between the two of them they controlled the Muslim press with a strong hand during the critical period.<sup>4</sup>

The Nawab's efforts as an Executive Councillor earned him such contradictory reputations as being a Muslim communalist<sup>5</sup> and anti-Muslim,<sup>6</sup> anti-Indian and an "able exponent of popular views".<sup>7</sup> Doubtless the contradictions were provoked by the fact that he favoured no one more than the other and in fact proved an effective Councillor. Carmichael must have been of the same opinion. Apparently the Nawab's work was so appreciated by the Governor that he appointed the Nawab Vice-President of the Executive Council in

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1. Carmichael to Hardinge 6 Sept. 1914, Ibid; Vol.Val2, pt.I. p.165.

2. Carmichael to Hardinge 28 Oct. 1914, Ibid, Vol.Val2 pt.I. pp.346d-347.

3. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 2 Jan, 1915, p.22

4. Ibid: week ending 4 March 1916, p.333

5. Nat.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 11 Jan. 1913, p.23

6. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 4 March 1916, p.324

7. Nat.owned Eng N.P.: week ending 11 Jan. 1913, p.23.

succession to P.C. Lyon : the first Indian to be so appointed.<sup>1</sup>

Both in the elections and in the Executive Council the nobles showed signs of proving Minto's assessment correct once more. All indications pointed towards the Ex-Viceroy being proved correct in the Legislative Council also. The intelligentsia had failed to gain sufficient seats in the Council to become effective. But Surendranath Banerjea was not the type of person to be discouraged by such adversities. In spite of the fact that he found himself without a following in the newly elected Council, he did not despair. On the other hand he concentrated successfully in organising the Indian members behind him to form a group closely resembling a formal party. From the day the new Council assembled it was obvious that Surendranath Banerjea was to be the leader of the "opposition". His ability as a debater was unmatched in the Council, and his judgement as to when to remain silent could be rarely faulted. Outside the chamber he worked with the industry of an able chief whip.

It was also apparent from the beginning that, despite the revocation of the partition, his interpretation of the nationalist cause had not changed. As before, he continued the policy of constantly opposing the Government. Always the opposition continued, unremitting and, as far as the Government could see, unreasonable.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The Englishman: 14 Apr. 1917, p.6.

2. J.H. Broomfield, p.68.

It came to a stage, as the Nayak pointed out, where the Government hesitated to accept any proposal emanating from any spokesman of the party of which Surendranath Banerjea was the leader.<sup>1</sup> The officials were quite aware of the danger of allowing their guards to drop since the day was past when they could answer Indians in the Council with "airy nothings".<sup>2</sup>

Thus a stage arrived, as Surendranath Banerjea pointed out, when the rule became that the officials must vote with the Government unless released by the authority of the President.<sup>3</sup> In time it also became apparent that, in practice, the European non-officials sided with the Government. Ultimately, in spite of all endeavours by Carmichael, the line in the Legislative Council was drawn with the Officials and Europeans on one side opposing the Indian non-officials on the other.<sup>4</sup>

Keeping the above in view, it would appear that the Chamber was divided into the Government's party comprising twenty one Europeans and officials with three Executive Councillors and twenty seven Indians as the opposition.<sup>5</sup> A study of the divisions taken for the various motions,<sup>6</sup> however, shows that out of the twenty seven Indians, Surendranath Banerjea was unable to bring the nine noblemen<sup>7</sup> quite in line with the others: thus once more justifying Minto's calculation. Under a formal party

1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 13 Dec. 1913, p.1290.

2. Wilson to Hardinge 2 March 1912, Correspondence:  
Fleetwood Wilson, Vol.5, p.64.

3. S.N. Banerjea, p.124.

4. J.H. Broomfield, p.77.

5. India Office List: 1914, p.44.

6. See: B.L.P. 1913-17.

7. Dacca, Burdwan, Law, Mymensingh, Nashipur, Kakina, Hossain, Haider, Nawab Ali; after Dacca's demise the number still remained 9 as Danindra Narayan took his seat in Council.

system the above three would have been described as the Treasury, the Opposition, and the Independent members.

The leaders of the intelligentsia put great stress on the possession of independent views. But the nobles were convinced that the intelligentsia had no independent views. Their approach was not one of independence but one of perpetual opposition to the Government to gain mass appeal the easy way. The nobles' approach on the other hand, which according to them was truly independent and responsible, was voiced by the Maharaja of Burdwan in a Council meeting when he said that he "did not recognise any sides in Council. There was only one party here that was to carry on good Government."<sup>1</sup> This difference in their attitude made the nobles unpopular with the intelligentsia.

As early as 1911 in the previous Council, Maharaja Tagore was viciously accused of misuse of responsibility from the platform of the Indian National Congress. Speaking on the Calcutta Improvement Bill, A. Chaudhuri stated that the Maharaja "found himself in a dilemma. He thought his nomination carried with it the obligation to vote with the Government. But the noble scion... was unable to be present when the matter came to the vote... and we did not get

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1. The Bengalee: 23 Aug. 1911, p.2.

the benefit of this vote one way or the other."<sup>1</sup> The speaker quite overlooked the fact that, if there was any question of obligation which made it imperative on the Maharaja to vote with the Government, his withdrawal from the scene was an act of diplomatic defiance rather than otherwise.

The Raja of Kakina was also severely criticised by the press for having abstained from voting during the resolution on the Sanitary Committee. Because the Bill gave the impression that the Government was attempting to gain powers of interference over the autonomous local bodies, it provoked a lot of criticism in the press. The Raja was accused of being afraid of drawing official displeasure on himself. He refuted the allegation by pointing out that he did not vote, since he had gone to the Council meeting "wholly unprepared one way or the other". He explained the reason by stating, "The Hon'ble Mr. Chakravarti and other supporters of it had a private conference on the previous date. They discussed the resolution. Mr. Chakravarti wanted to invite me to it but did not do so being wrongly informed that I was not in town." Since he had not been briefed, nor had the opportunity to weigh the matter, he refused to cast his vote. His treatment of the issue was clarified by a supporter in the columns of the Bengalee. He wrote "As he was not convinced of the usefulness or otherwise of the measure he was quite

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1. I.N.C.R.: 1911, pp.86,87.

right by not siding with any party; for would it be in keeping with his sense of duty if he, only to avoid ungenerous criticism of an irresponsible critic, insisted upon the resolution without understanding its utility".<sup>1</sup> The Raja's behaviour speaks volumes on their attitude. Their duty was to guide the Executive in the "right channels" after matured consideration of the issue involved and not simply oppose the Government, like Surendranath Banerjea's followers, nor blindly support it, like the Europeans and the officials.

The perfect example of an independent approach was shown by the Maharaja of Nashipur. The Bengal Medical Bill was introduced with the intent of registering all properly qualified medical practitioners in the province. Since the definition covered only those qualified in allopathic medicine from Government or Government recognised institutions, it created a great deal of controversy. Under the circumstances, such eminent institutions as the Belgatchia Hospital and the National Medical College would be left out. Fazlul Huq moved that the draft should be circulated for a longer time before forwarding it to the Select Committee. All the non-official speakers supported his proposal except the Maharaja of Nashipur. He maintained, "I am not at all anxious that it should be postponed because ample opportunity will be available to those who would like to submit their suggestions

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1. The Bengalee: 19 Sept. 1913, p.5.



to the Select Committee". Reluctantly, Fazlul Huq took the floor again, with the remark that he had to do so since a member from their own side of the House had unnecessarily advocated the Government's cause when there were enough people on the Treasury side to do so. The leaders of the intelligentsia found it very difficult to appreciate that the nobles, unlike themselves, refused to acknowledge that the House comprised the Treasury and the Opposition. Fazlul Huq elaborated his motion by explaining that the postponement was advisable because the public required more time to discuss not merely the details of the Bill, but the very principle of it. He also drew attention in the House to the fact that a member had informed him only a day before of a number of medical practitioners complaining of the short time allotted to examine an issue of such vital importance to their profession. Appreciating the validity of the arguments, the Maharaja cast his vote against his own previous opposition when a division was called for.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of their impartial approach to issues a survey of the Council of 1913-17 shows that the nobles proved a failure in the Council chamber. The Nawab of Dacca, a highly respected and influential nobleman, was absent more often than not. Doubtless it was due to his failing health and pecuniary difficulties. Yet the fact remains that his absence deprived the nobles of a powerful

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1. 'Bengal Medical Bill 1914', B.L.G.D.: 1914, pp.18-26, 27-28, 30.

voice.

The nobles also proved inadequate in their capacity to debate and hold the floor. In that respect they were totally out-classed by the leaders of the intelligentsia. The Maharaja of Burdwan and Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury, who were capable of swaying the masses in public meetings with their powers of oratory, were hardly ever heard in the Council chamber. They chose to remain silent too often. Even when the Maharaja did speak, the speeches lacked the vigour necessary for a parliamentarian.

Lack of vigour was noticeable even when issues were brought forward by one of them. Frequently they lost the initiative to others. During the debate on the Public Demands Recovery Bill 1913<sup>1</sup>, Raja Reshee Case Law had tabled a number of amendments. Most members agreed with him that too little time had been given to them to study the proposed Bill and the amendments that followed. But the actual motion to postpone the Bill did not emanate from the Raja. It was Surendranath Ray, supported by Surendranath Banerjea and Byomkesh Chakravarti who did so. The Raja appeared to be satisfied by merely casting his vote in favour of the postponement. If he had voted against the motion, one may have presumed that he would be satisfied with a mere debate on his proposed amendment and that he did not feel the need for a delay. But since he did not do so, it can only

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1. 'Public Demands Recovery Bill 1913', B.I.C.D.: 1913, pp. 424-427, 437-446.

be interpreted as otherwise. Later he again moved a very controversial amendment. The Bill allowed the certificate officer to take arbitrary actions against a defaulter. He could summon a debtor, examine the issue, and pronounce the verdict all by himself. In other words it went against all principles of separation of power. It was felt by the members that, due to the inefficient system of issuing notice, the debtor could quite inadvertently get into trouble with the certificate officer who was provided with such exceptional powers by the Bill. Thus it was moved that all notices should be delivered by registered post to make sure that the person involved had received the notice personally. Only in this way could it be assured that the summons had actually come to the responsible person's notice, rather than risking the possibility of its disappearing somewhere in between the long chain of servants from the outer gate of his residence to the inner personal chambers where he would normally be found. Otherwise, unjust exparte verdicts could be easily passed. The point was so controversial that it provoked the independent tabling of three amendments - including the Raja's - calling for the notices to be forwarded by registered post. Raja Reshee Case Law had taken the initiative. But during the debate, the other speakers - S.N.Ray, Nalinaksha Basu, S.N.Banerjea, B.Chakravarti, and Mahendranath Roy - far outshone the Raja in every respect and made him appear incompetent.<sup>1</sup>

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1. 'Public Demands Recovery Bill 1913', B.L.C.D.: 1913, pp.424-427, 437-446.

Even the Raja of Kakina's reason for having abstained from casting his vote explained previously, though admirable on the surface, shows signs of incompetency on closer examination. The question that comes to mind is whether the Raja was unable to take a decision on his own. Was his competency so limited that he could not weigh the pros and cons for himself in order to come to a decision? The Bill generated considerable controversy since it involved the important issue regarding autonomy of local bodies. This is obvious from the fact that there were three dissenting notes signed in the Select Committee.<sup>1</sup> But during the debate, except for a few remarks by Raja Reshee Case Law no other noble was heard taking part. The failure to do so seems all the more glaring when we notice that the Bill affected the rural areas.<sup>2</sup> Moreover there were occasions during the debate when a number of them did not even attend.<sup>3</sup>

Their weakness was further visible in the manner in which they voted. Their ideas of independence went too far. They not only remained independent of the Government and the "opposition", but also continued to remain independent of each other. They had been able to secure the number of seats which could have given them the decisive position in the Council. By their combined strength they could have tipped the scale for or against any motion.

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1. 'Bengal Municipal Bill 1913' B.L.P.: 1914, Vol.9378, Select Com.Rep.
  2. Ibid: B.L.C.D.: 1913, pp. 420-440.
  3. Ibid.

But they never appreciated their potentiality and failed to work as a group.

Repeatedly this weakness was noticeable. When the motion to postpone the Public Demands Recovery Bill was put to a division, it was lost by a single vote.<sup>1</sup> Although all the nobles voted together with Raja Reshee Case Law he neglected to make sure that the Maharaja of Nashipur, the Raja of Kakina, Nawab Hossain Haidar, and the Nawab of Dacca would also be in the chamber to assure him of victory.<sup>2</sup> Similar was the case when the Maharaja of Burdwan moved that the controversial Calcutta Improvement Bill 1914 be postponed because the War had started and it would be unwise to discuss issues of such controversial nature. Doubtless the motion was permeated with the sobriety and conservative approach predicted by Minto. But when the division was taken the vote went against him.<sup>3</sup> It was one of those unusual occasions when even a European voted for a motion introduced by an Indian member. But the Maharaja had not assured the presence of Nawab Hossain Haidar, and the Maharajas of Natore and Nashipur, despite being aware of the fact that the very powerful President of the Improvement Trust was doing his utmost to push the Bill through. Moreover, he was unable to prevent the Raja of Kakina from abstaining from casting his vote.<sup>4</sup>

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1. 20: 21.

2. 'Public Demands Recovery Bill 1913', B.L.C.D.: 1913, p.427.

3. 18:22.

4. 'Calcutta Improvement Bill 1914', B.L.C.D.: 1915, pp.35,38,39.

Unfortunately for them, their approach was more idealistic than practical. Their inability to appreciate the necessity for parties in Council politics negated any possible collective effectiveness. The consequences of their weakness was apparent in the ensuing elections. The end of 1916 found Bengal preparing once more for a Council election. By the time of these elections nationalist politics had begun to play a more important role than in the 1912 elections. While the nobles wasted their chance by not concentrating on becoming a cohesive political block, the moderate leaders of the intelligentsia had diligently worked towards that very goal.

While local influence was still to some extent important for securing votes, a nationalist reputation or conviction now carried considerable weight at the polls. Surendranath Banerjea and his followers' work in the Council from 1913 had attracted a great deal of attention and provoked considerable comment extending their spheres of influence even into the mufassil<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, as the Dainik Basumati pointed out, they had given up the apparent habit of merely talking of "ambitious reforms like autonomy, simultaneous Civil Service Examinations and the like", and had "begun attending to the alleviation of practical evils like malaria".<sup>2</sup> Such issues affected the general public rather than only a microscopic minority comprising the intelligentsia. The nobles were unable to claim any more that they, rather than the so-called nationalists represented local needs. Thus the argument that, while they

1. S.N. Banerjea, p.300.

2. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 4 March 1916, p.330.

came to grips with particular issues which affected various interest groups, the nationalists wasted their time on nebulous demands, became redundant. Furthermore, a strong movement was afoot leading towards the amalgamation of the Congress and the Moslem League<sup>1</sup>, which gave a further boost to the leaders of the intelligentsia increasing their charisma in the rural areas even further.

It must not be presumed from the above remarks that the nobles withdrew altogether. The landholders' constituencies were primarily still in the hands of the group under review: The Maharaja of Burdwan stood once more unchallenged from the Burdwan Division, and was returned uncontested. But from the other divisions it was apparent that a younger element had gained in popularity and had wrested the limelight away from their senior members. The older representatives had proved a disappointment in the previous Council, and even their fellow zamindars apparently lost faith in their capability as Councillors. It was one thing to respect such awe-inspiring, depersonalised figures surrounded by semi-legendary aura, and quite another to see them being out-shone in all respects when forced out into the open by people considered ordinary and mundane. Over the last few years the imaginary giants shed their illusory affect in the eyes of the public, and turned out to be very ordinary men after all. The nobles seen and heard rather smashed the mythology that had been built up in

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1. Discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

their absence. Its effect was felt in all other constituencies than the reserved seat for the landholders of Burdwan Division.

From the Rajshahi Division the Maharaja of Dighapatia stood for election, supported by the North Bengal Zamindars Association.<sup>1</sup> He was challenged by Kumar Shibsekhareswar Roy of Tajhat. The Kumar was a graduate of the Calcutta University. Since his graduation some eight years before, he had remained on his estate, devoting himself diligently to the interest of his prajas, and had gained a reputation as an energetic young man.<sup>2</sup> When the results were announced, it was the Kumar who won the greater number of votes and was returned to the Legislative Council.<sup>3</sup> A similar trend was noticeable in the Dacca Division. The two contestants were the Raja of Santosh and Kumar Brojendra Kishore of Gouripur. A third contestant, Deva Kumar Roy Cahudhuri, withdrew his candidature on behalf of the Raja, and asked his supporters to support his election. Along with this, the Raja's nomination by influential Hindus, Muslim and European landholders of the locality, practically assured his victory.<sup>4</sup> Yet when the results were disclosed, it was found that he had managed to secure only 63 votes against a 156 for the Kumar.<sup>5</sup> At the Presidency Division, Provas Chandra

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1. The Bengalee, 23 May, 1916, p.2.

2. Ibid: 5 Jan. 1916, p.3.

3. India Office List: 1917, p.44.

4. The Bengalee: 17 May 1916, p.2.

5. Ibid: 16 June 1916, p.4.



Mitra quite comfortably defeated Byomkesh Chakravarti, the person in whose favour the Maharaja of Kassimbazar had withdrawn during the 1912 elections.<sup>1</sup> It was only in the Chittagong Division that Kumar Arun Chandra Singh of Paikpara managed to easily defeat his rival contestant, Prassana Kumar Roy, with 33 votes against the latter's 22.<sup>2</sup> But it must be kept in mind that the representative of the noble family was a kumar and not a nobleman in the sense applicable in Bengal.

In other constituencies the nobles fared even worse than in the seats reserved for landholders. From the Muslim constituencies not a single one stood nor nominated candidates for the elections. Apparently the impact of the Congress-Moslem League pact resulted in the Nawabs being totally disconcerted for the time being. From the Corporation of Calcutta also no nobleman stood for election. In the municipalities, the only division that found members of noble families contesting was the Presidency Division. Surendranath Roy was opposed by the Maharaj Kumar Bhupendra Narain Sinha of Nashipur, and the Raja of Azimgunj. The Raja later withdrew in favour of the Maharaj Kumar with the intention of strengthening his chances.<sup>3</sup> Yet, when the results were announced it was found that Surendranath Roy had been returned.<sup>4</sup>

Even in the District Boards, where the nobles had considerable influence, they seemed to have slipped from the forefront. From Dacca and Chittagong not one

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1. Ibid: 8 June 1916, p.4.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 28 May 1916, p.2.

4. India Office List: 1917, p.44.

of them contested. Presumably the death of the Nawab of Dacca had sapped the courage and confidence of the local nobles to contest the claims of the leaders of the intelligentsia. In spite of the Congress-Moslem League pact, the Nawab's personal support may have persuaded many to vote for his nominee. But without him the chances were negligible. In Burdwan the Raja of Chakdighi was defeated by Mahendra Chandra Mitra.

The most unexpected incident of the entire election was the defeat in the Presidency Division of Raja Reshee Case Law by Bhabendra Chandra Roy by 28 votes to 12.<sup>1</sup> The Nayak was startled into publishing, "We are surprised at the defeat of an able man like Raja Hrishikesh Laha. We must say that persons who can ignore his claim in favour of a stripling are capable of doing anything."<sup>2</sup> Obviously the Raja's poor rating in the previous Council had convinced the electorate that it was he rather than the "stripling" who was unsuited for parliamentary politics.

In the Rajshahi Division Nawabzada Altaf Ali of Bogra managed to just about get the majority vote of 14 against 11 for Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri. Although in this Division a member of a noble family had managed to retain the District Board seat, it must be kept in mind that once more the choice of the electorate fell on a younger nobleman. The Raja of Kakina, who also had stood for the same seat, and had managed to defeat

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1. The Bengalee: 7 June 1915, p.1.

2. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 17 June 1916, p.830.

Jogesh Chandra in the 1912 election received negligible support in the 1916 election.<sup>1</sup>

With the election completed, the Governor announced his nominations. In spite of their unfavourable rating at the polls, the Governor still found it worth-while to nominate two nobles - Raja Reshee Case Law and the Nawab of Murshidabad - out of the four Bengalis. The Raja's nomination received a favourable reaction from the Bengali.<sup>2</sup> But the Dainik Basumati justifiably condemned the nomination of a person who had actually been defeated in open election in a mixed constituency, pointing to the fact that the electorate lacked confidence in his ability.<sup>3</sup> Likewise the leading Muslim newspaper, the Muhammadi, reacted in anger to the nomination of the Nawab. It pointed out that he took no part in any social or political movement of the Muslims. The community knew him only as "a pensioner, a great zamindar, and a scion of an ancient ruling family."<sup>4</sup>

Doubtless, the Raja was still the undisputed prince of the merchants of Bengal. Despite his defeat in the polls, he still was the obvious person to represent the interest of the Indian commercial community. His importance in the commercial community was such that even the British oriented chambers of commerce respected his ability.<sup>5</sup> As for the Nawab, with the death of the Nawab of Dacca and

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1. The Bengalee: 8 June 1916, p.4.

2. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 8 July 1916, p.936

3. Ibid: week ending 8 July 1916, p.936.

4. Ibid: week ending 15 July 1916, p.974.

5. Carmichael to Crewe 15 July 1916, Letters Carmichael: Crewe, Box c/6.

the departure of Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury to the Imperial Council the Governor's choice for a Muslim member had become rather limited. He felt that the Nawab of Murshidabad's presence in the Council might keep a considerable section of the middle-of-the-road Muslims from joining the disaffected extremists.<sup>1</sup> Carmichael's intentions were "to try to get the Nawab of Murshidabad to come to the front. He has family position and traditions at any rate, and is well educated and intelligent".<sup>2</sup> Moreover his influence could still work magic amongst the Muslim population. Although the Muhammadi insinuated that the Nawab carried no weight with the Muslims, it could not be overlooked that it was not the efforts of the educated people that had stemmed the communal riots of 1912, but a manifesto issued by the Nawab calling on his co-religionists to stop the unnecessary blood bath.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the Council which assembled after the election had twenty two officials and Europeans with twenty eight Indians of whom seven were members of noble families.<sup>4</sup> In spite of their loss of reputation as parliamentarians, by a stroke of good fortune the nobles once more found themselves in a position from which they could become effective as a power block. If the younger members managed to infuse a dynamic approach into debates which the former group had failed to do, they still had the opportunity to become a powerful voice in the Council.

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1. Carmichael to Crewe 28 July 1915, Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Nat.owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 30 Nov. 1912, p.731.

4. Murshidabad, law, Burdwan, Tajhat, Bogra, Paikpara, Gouripur.

At the outset it appeared that the Maharaj Kumar of Tajhat would prove to be such a debater. He was articulate and his debates were argumentative. He could hold his ground in the House as well as any other Indian member of the Legislative Council. If he had concentrated on gaining the respect of his senior members he could have done so. In that case he could have brought the entire group into line with him. Instead of which he alienated them with his unfortunate habit of phrasing his speeches without any caution.

The Kumar's speech concerning the Hindu (Inter-castes) Marriage Validity Bill was one such typical example. To substantiate his opposition to the Bill he rather offensively questioned the Government and the European members as to whether they would "accuse a Christian, who on religious grounds opposes a Bigamy Bill, as one showing determination to uphold a narrow Biblical rule of monogamy with all its miseries and the wretchedness for the poor helpless maids".<sup>1</sup> It was impolite, to say the least, to compare the act of opposing bigamy to the opposition of giving children born of inter-caste marriages inheritance rights. Doubtless both injunctions could be traced back to the respective sacred texts. But that is as far as the comparison could be stretched. Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee found it necessary to declare in a public speech that the opponents of the Bill did not say it was wrong to inter-marry. They merely took their stand that it was wrong to legislate against the scriptures when

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1. The Englishman: 9 Dec. 1918, p.8.

there existed no immediate need to do so. If the people wished to inter-marry there was nothing to stop them. This being the case, there was no call for the above legislation. He supplemented his remark by citing several cases of intercaste marriages that had taken place long before the Bill was even considered.<sup>1</sup> The contrast between the language used by the two is blatantly striking in the above example.

Moreover, the Kumar showed a lack of mutual understanding with the other nobles in the Council. Speaking of the Select Committee on the Village Self-Government Bill, he vehemently complained that though the zamindars were vitally interested in the legislation there was not a single representative of the zamindars in the Committee. He quite ignored the fact that, although representing the District Boards, the Nawabzada of Bogra was a member of the Select Committee.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, his undiplomatic remarks were noticeable once more during the debates. He repeatedly proposed amendments on the grounds that they were necessary to help the poor villagers. But the amendments were so phrased that they left no doubt that it was an attempt to help the landholders only. One such amendment was that the Union Boards should meet half the cost of tanks' and ponds' clearance. He ignored the need for clearing pits, ditches, wells and other such places.

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1. Ibid: 14 Dec. 1918, p.3.

2. 'Village Self-Government Bill 1918', B.L.C.D.: 1918, pp.1064,1065.

It was the latter which would benefit the poor villagers since the former were usually owned by the relatively affluent landholders.<sup>1</sup> Such undiplomatic language most certainly further diminished the reputation of the landholders and undermined their claim of being the natural leaders of the rural population.

It was frequently necessary for the older nobles to take the floor simply to retrieve their reputation from jeopardy by the careless remarks of the Kumar. Speaking on the Primary Education Bill, Raja Reshee Case Law pointed out that "hitherto the primary schools have not been attractive, as the instructions given in them are too theoretical and have no reference to the condition of employment and livelihood of the people ... what is wanted, is practical education. Instructions in handicrafts and agriculture should go hand in hand with vocational guidance which would secure a better preparation for life's occupation ...". In contrast to the Raja's careful phrasing, the Kumar of Tajhat moved that to have the Bill introduced in the mufassil it should not be brought about by a mere majority of the Commissioners, but by three fourths of the total number of Commissioners. He stated that "there are impatient idealists everywhere who in their enthusiasm often overlook the practical difficulties that will stand in their way. If such a person be in authority, it would not be very difficult for him

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1. Ibid, B.L.C D.: 1919, pp 787,790.

at one of the meetings to have his own ideas regarding the introduction of compulsory education system carried, even if the bulk of the ratepayers do not want it ... As I know something about the condition of our mufassil municipalities, and union committees, I cannot but hold

that it would be dangerous to allow the municipalities to decide the fate of such an important matter by bare majority." The Kumar's ill-phrased remarks infuriated Surendranath Ray who countered the accusation by stating that "if there are impatient idealists in the mufassil towns, there are also retrograde reactionaries there too". The situation deteriorated to a dangerous level. Raja Reshee Case Law tried to retrieve their position by proposing that it should be a majority in a meeting in which not less than two-thirds of the total number of Commissioners were present. The motion was at last accepted by the House.<sup>1</sup>

It was during the discussions of the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill 1917 that the differences between him and the older nobles came glaringly to focus. The Bill dealt with the aboriginal tribes' needs to be protected from the possibility of losing their ancestral lands and being reduced to the position not far removed from serfdom. The Bill forbade the transfer of property by an aboriginal tenant to an outsider. He could sublet or make usufructuary mortgage of land "under his own cultivation" to another aboriginal. Debendra Chandra Ghose and Ambica Charan Majumdar moved that the phrase "under his own cultivation" should be changed to "in his own possession"

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1 'Primary Education Bill 1917', B.L.C.D. : 1919, pp. 152-153, 187



or "held by him", since it could otherwise lead to tenure holders not cultivating their own land being unable to do so. A division was taken and lost. Although the amendment would benefit them, the nobles present voted in a body against it, substantiating their claim that they were the guardians of the cultivators' interest.

But the uniformity did not last for long. The Bill stated that, if an aboriginal tenant surrendered his tenancy or abandoned his residence, the landlord might settle the tenancy with another aboriginal or "with the approval of the Collector in writing, settle the same with a person who is not an aboriginal or retain it in his own possession". The Kumar of Tajhat moved that the section threatened the zamindars with a serious encroachment on their rights as landlords were required not only to seek the written approval of the collector to settle the tenancy with a non-aboriginal but also if he wanted to retain it in his own possession. The reason given for the prior sanction of the Collector was to avoid the collusive transfer between a zamindar, an aboriginal tenant and an outsider, with the intention of securing a bigger registration fee. The Kumar pointed out that the maximum fee in one transaction hardly exceeded Rs.25; "so the prospect of getting a rupee or two more is certainly not so big a temptation as to make a respectable zamindar stoop so low". Moreover, the other potential conspirators would also run a grave risk.

Under the prevailing Bengal Tenancy Act, an abandoned holding could be reclaimed by a tenant at any time within a period of two years of abandonment. Surely no sensible person would risk money on so doubtful a transaction. Furthermore, if the zamindar was really unscrupulous and all three parties were bent upon the conspiracy, many ways could be manufactured to secure the desired end. Thus, the only result of this section of the Bill, which it would achieve, would be in persuading the zamindars not to settle any land with aboriginals in the future - defeating the very purpose of the proposed legislation.

The speech was full of well argued points with some substance behind them. Moreover, the motion was concluded by the Kumar in keeping with the tradition established by the nobles of the previous Council. He emphasised that in the Council since there were no party programmes it was the duty of all the members to vote as they thought proper. But then he ruined it all by adding, "We may succeed or fail in carrying a motion, but it does not affect the Government in the least, because our opinions are only a kind of recommendation to the Government." The words implied that the Government was callous of the opinion of the Council since it was a mere advisory board of no value. When the division was taken all the younger members of the group participated in the voting. But, although the amendment dealt with matters closely affecting their personal interests, the Maharaja of Burdwan and Raja Reshee Case Law decided to abstain. Presumably, they refused to

associate their names with a motion worded so discourteously in their opinion: insulting both the Government and the Council. It is not possible to know how the Nawab of Murshidabad would have reacted, since he was absent from the proceedings.<sup>1</sup>

Later, the Kumar moved that the entire Bill be sent back to the Select Committee for review. It was this motion which brought the differences to a head and created a more or less permanent schism between the Kumar and the older nobles in the Council. He argued that some of the provisions made unnecessary encroachments on the zamindars' rights and endangered the position of their tenants. Not only did he make this unprecedented demand, he also worded it in a most undiplomatic fashion. He suggested that the Bill as originally drafted advocated "extreme Civil Service views" which was opposed to "the honour of the Bengal zamindars", placing the two, as such, in opposing groups. Cummings, the Member-in-charge, infuriated, replied, "I cannot congratulate the Hon'ble Member on the attitude which he has thought fit to adopt in connection with the legislation. I gather from his amendment that his view is that sufficient safeguards have not been given to protect the vested interests of the landlords and tenants; but from his speech it is fair inference that it was directed almost entirely to the interests of the landlords..."

The motion was too full of dangerous connotations for the older nobles merely to withdraw their support in silence as before. The Kumar had suggested that the Select

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1. 'Beng. Tenancy (Amend) Bill 1917', B.L.C.D.: 1917, pp. 949-951, 953, 954,

Committee had neglected the interests of the zamindars when the Maharaja of Burdwan and Raja Reshee Case Law had been members of the Committee. Abul Kassem replied that the landholders "were represented by the foremost zamindar in the land". Moreover, the Kumar had insulted the Government and the Civil Service. Furthermore, he had come close to confessing, as their representative, that the zamindars were negligent of the well-being of their tenants and other residents on their estates. The Maharaja of Burdwan in a desperate attempt to retrieve the zamindars' reputation publicly took the Kumar to task in the Council chamber. He stated, "... there are some zamindars who do not grudge the Santhali having lands in his own khas mahal zamindari. In fact I know of zamindars in these parts who welcome them as being good tenants. I, therefore, think that for those zamindars at least the defence the Kumar has made does not apply, because they can defend themselves and their good understanding between themselves and the aboriginal tenants." The he added, "...I am not only sorry but in fact unhappy in the way the Hon'ble Kumar has tried to defend the rights of zamindars in his fighting speech, according to his light. I cannot help thinking that at the present time more than at any other moment it is essential for the zamindars not only to show the spirit of friendliness and cooperation towards their tenants but it is also, I think, not fair to the other zamindars to try and make out that the zamindars in their desire to protect their rights - and I am more zealous about protecting their rights than anybody else - for I have a right to be - are trying - which unfortunately

is the impression that has been created in my mind at any rate by the Kumar's attitude - to wrest from the Government those rights and privileges, in such a way as would be misconstrued or would give the impression that the zamindars are anxious to safeguard their rights more than to extend protection to their own tenants. That would indeed be a most unfortunate impression to be created in the Council, especially at a time when the zamindars are on trial".

Paying no attention to the Maharaja, the Kumar reacted by replying, "I am not surprised at the attitude taken by the Hon'ble Maharajadhiraj Bahadur - he has to keep up the family tradition". Not stopping at that, he continued with "I prayed for justice and fairness and it is my keen disappointment to realise that I prayed in vain. However, I have one consolation in that the official reply has hopelessly failed to prove that I stand not on firm grounds of fairness and justice, and this fact sends a ray of hope to my disappointed soul and thus encouraged I stand before the Council for its verdict on my humble, and I think not unreasonable, prayer." The verdict was blatantly clear. He hopelessly lost the motion, with two other votes than his own cast in his favour and thirty six votes against.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately the Maharaja of Burdwan very rarely took the floor as he did on the above occasion. His inherited seniority alone would have made it possible

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1. 'Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill 1917, B.L.C.D.:  
1918, pp.51,54,56-59

for him to make the group into an effective power block if he had put himself to it. Even in the proceedings of the Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Bill 1917, which dealt with ghi adulteration, he did not say more than a few sentences.<sup>1</sup> Being aware of the fact that he was the spokesman of the delegation that called on the Governor only a few days before, which instigated the Bill, the attitude seems inconceivable. His lack of participation in debates, the Nawab of Murshidabad's frequent absence, Raja Reshee Case Law's loss of prestige due to the election defeat, and the Kumar of Tajhat's break-away from the group, forever ended the possibility of the nobles forming an effective block and sitting as a counterpoise to the moderate leaders of the intelligentsia.

But the Maharaja of Burdwan found another chance to be effective from a different platform. He was appointed the Indian Executive Councillor by Ronaldshay. As early as 1916, the Maharaja had been considered for the vacancy but was placed very much lower than S.P.Sinha and R.N. Mookerjee by Carmichael. While recommending the three to the Secretary of State, Carmichael wrote that the points in favour of the Maharaja were that he was a "premier Hindu nobleman", was "distinctly intelligent, fairly broad-minded and well educated", was "hard working" and "of good moral character and respected". Moreover, he had taken

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1. 'Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Bill 1917',  
B.L.C.D.: 1917, pp.723-742.

"more personal interest than most landlords in Bengal do in the management of his own affairs and seems honestly anxious for the prosperity of those who live on his property". But the Governor placed him much lower than the other two because he had a number of points which went against him. Firstly, he was "very conceited, and has a most exaggerated idea of the importance of everything which concerns himself". Moreover, "he does not like to be thought ignorant, and often assumes an appearance of knowledge which he does not possess. This is apt to mislead persons who consult him, for he often professes to agree with opinions, which in reality he only does not try to controvert, because he could not do so without betraying his ignorance". Furthermore, "he attaches so much importance to forms that he would ... be of little use in doing anything which it was essential should be done quickly".<sup>1</sup> Thus the next Indian Executive Councillor to be appointed was S.P.Sinha.

The Maharaja was once more recommended along with Bhupendranath Basu for the executive vacancy created in the Secretary of State's Council by the retiring of Daljit Singh.<sup>2</sup> He lost his chance to Bhupendranath Basu.

With the arrival of the new Governor, the Maharaja at last got the opportunity for the office which he had desired for some time. Ronaldshay was an old Conservative

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1. Carmichael to Chamberlain 28 June 1916, Governors Letters: 1915-17, pp. 177-181.

2. Sec.St. to Viceroy 7 May 1917 (Telegrams), L & T(India), Vol.8, pt.I, p.110.

member of Parliament who had served as Curzon's A.D.C during his term of office.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja, though of a different race, held similar views as the Conservatives in England. He was a member of the Conservative party in England and was proud of being a Tory.<sup>2</sup> His political ideas, concept of the Imperial Commonwealth, inherent respect for the sovereign, and pride in being the subject of the Crown, were in no way different to the Conservatives in England. His political ideas had taken shape under the careful guidance of Lord Curzon whom the Maharaja held in great esteem and affection.<sup>3</sup> Even after the Viceroy returned to England, he continued personal correspondence with the Maharaja, giving him advice on various matters.<sup>4</sup> He quite exasperated Carmichael and Hardinge<sup>5</sup> by his habit of starting his suggestions with the prefix that he had discussed the matter with George Curzon. Many even insinuated that the Maharaja went to the extent of imitating the mannerisms and the mode of dressing of Lord Curzon.<sup>6</sup> An English Conservative serving in Bengal would doubtless find considerable affinity with a person like the Maharaja.

As soon as the vacancy was created by Sinha's departure, Ronaldshay recommended the Maharaja for the office. Montagu, a liberal Secretary of State, replied advising the

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1. J.H. Broomfield, p.95

2. Burdwan to Curzon 6 Jan. 1909, Letters: Curzon, Vol. 426, p.84

3. In his book Studies the Maharaja writes at length of Curzon.

Every line speaks of his devotion, admiration, and profound respect for the Viceroy. He considered Curzon the greatest of all Viceroys, even more so than Wellesley - B.C. Mahtab: Studies, pp.83-91

4. See Curzon's Letters (1907-12) Vol. 426

5. Carmichael to Hardinge 10 July 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol. Va8, pt. 1, p.18

6. Carmichael to Chamberlain 28 June 1916, Governors Letters: 1915-17, p.181



Governor to change his mind.<sup>1</sup> Ronaldshay refused to do so. In the view of the Conservative Governor the very arguments that the liberal Secretary of State gave against the appointment seemed to go in favour of his choice. Ronaldshay wrote in his reply to Montagu, "It is true Burdwan is not a professional politician and it is also true that he holds reasonable and moderate views. This, however, appears to me to be a qualification.... He is the acknowledged leader among those possessing a ... stake in the country. He has always taken an active and prominent part in public affairs. He was a prominent member of the Legislative Council. He has discharged his duties courageously and with credit. Now if he is turned out it will be thought that the Government wants to placate the agitators. And that would be correct, would it not?"<sup>2</sup> Montagu replied back that Ronaldshay had ignored his suggestion to appoint able and experienced men. Ronaldshay refuted the accusation by stating that he regarded the Maharaja as "fulfilling both these conditions. He is certainly able, and he was also the most experienced of men available, since he had already acted twice for Sinha, and I feel sure that he will prove worthy of the trust which has been imposed on him".<sup>3</sup>

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1.Montagu to Ronaldshay 17 Feb.1919, Letters: Montagu, Vol.27, pp.52,53

2.Ronaldshay to Montagu 4 Feb.1919, Ibid, Vol.30, pp.13-16

3.Ronaldshay to Montagu 2 Apr.1919, Ibid, Vol.30, pp.27,28

Ronaldshay got his own way and the Maharaja was appointed. Many years later Ronaldshay, reviewing the dialogue, wrote in his memoirs the reason for his adamant demand. He wrote, "Montagu wanted a politician, Since however, under the new Constitution, half the Government would consist of politicians, I considered it of importance that the more conservative section of the population, which would be unlikely to subject itself to the rough and tumble involved in an appeal to the electorate, should be adequately represented in the Government, and I told him that I adhered to my recommendation." <sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja accepted his new responsibility, determined to make the Government's work a success during his term in office. He wrote to Ronaldshay that this was his primary aim and that he would not lose sight of it as long as he served in the Council. <sup>2</sup> His sincerity was appreciated, and very soon after his appointment he was given a delicate task to perform. The police had arrested two women under the Defence of India Act. Surendranath Banerjea promptly took the matter up in the Imperial Council and Mrs. Besant lodged a number of charges against the Bengal police. She accused them of taking recourse to torture of the most atrocious type. Ronaldshay reacted by instructing two Executive Councilors, Stevenson Moore and the Maharaja, to enquire into the charges. <sup>3</sup> The Maharaja, soon after, justified

1. L. J. L. Lundas: Essayez, p. 133

2. Burdwan to Zetland 24 Jan. 1919, Correspondence: Zetland, Vol. 5, p. 50

3. Bengal Diary: Zetland, Vol. 1, p. 127; There is no record of the results of the enquiry.

Ronaldshay's opinion that he would not hesitate to take a strong stand even if he earned unpopularity with the public. The Amrita Bazar Patrika's strong criticism against the Rowlatt Act was causing a great deal of unrest in the province. The Government felt that the paper's security should be forfeited as a disciplinary act. The Maharaja unhesitatingly concurred with the unpopular decision.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, his vested interest as a zamindar did not decrease his sense of responsibility in any way as an Executive Councillor. He was asked to handle the Rent Bill in the Legislative Council. Doubtless, it was not very pleasant for him to perform this task since it went counter to his own interests. He pointed out to the Governor that "it was no easy task for a property owner like myself to pilot the introduction of the Rent Bill in Council today". But as he also appreciated that his "position as a landlord instead of being a disqualification ought to have a good effect on the public mind", accepted the task with good grace.<sup>2</sup> Having conducted the Bill successfully he felt more than pleased with the way it was passed without any drastic changes. Ronaldshay congratulated him on his efforts and emphasised that the success was a feather in his cap.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most complex questions that Ronaldshay's Executive Council had to face was the amnesty order passed after the War. The order to extend amnesty

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1. Ibid, p.226

2. Burdwan to Zetland 15 March 1920, Correspondence: Zetland, Vol.5, pp.61-62

3. Ibid, 14 Apr.1920, p.63

to political detenus and state prisoners was sprung upon the Government without any warning. According to Ronaldshay the proclamation placed the whole onus of making exceptions upon the Viceroy; but the animus which would inevitably be excited would have to be faced by the local Government. Moreover, the order had been passed at a time when the Government had received information that there was a serious attempt to revive the activity of the Jugantar Party. It was said that dakoity was being contemplated and that the assassination of a police officer was also being discussed. After serious consideration, Ronaldshay's Government recommended that the release of at least 57 detenus be postponed. But Montagu refused to contemplate such exceptions. The Executive Council met again to decide on whether to take a stiff attitude as far as the externment orders were concerned. Cumming was a little doubtful of the usefulness of such a course. He pointed out that in light of Montagu's instructions, to defy it would be pointless. With the intent of overcoming the obstacle, Lowndes suggested that the Indian Moderate Party should be consulted and the responsibility thrown on them if they refused to support the policy. At this stage the Maharaja intervened. He concurred with the Governor that strong measures be

adopted. But in answer to Lowndes' suggestion, he pointed out that he had some confidential conversations with friends and had concluded that the Moderate Party would be bound to join the extremists in an agitation against the Government on this question.<sup>1</sup> Based on his findings, the Government came to a definite decision on the attitude that it should adopt. Doubtless the Maharaja, like Nawab Shamsul Huda and Raja Kishori Lal Goswami, was proving an able and careful Executive Councillor. His work had led the Government to consider appointing him as an Indian member for the Imperial Executive Council. But Ronaldshay did not wish to part with him and the matter was dropped.<sup>2</sup> The only factor which gives rise to a feeling of doubt in him is that he was so keen on making the task of the Government a success that one is forced to conclude he must have fallen short in his capacity as the representative of the Indian interests. There is no evidence to establish the above. But at the same time there is little evidence to show otherwise either. Despite the lack of evidence, one is left with the uneasy feeling that a person with his Government-biased attitude must have necessarily found it hard to support Indian views if they ever went contrary to the Government.

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1. Bencal Diary : Zetland, Vol. 2, pp. 7-14,

2. Ronaldshay to Montagu 23 June 1920, Letters: Zetland, Vol. 31, p. 82.

In spite of that shortcoming, the experience of the three nobles show that, in their capacity as Executive Councillors they proved successful. It was undoubtedly so because of their experience as intermediaries of public affairs. The function of the Indian Executive Councillor, apart from departmental responsibility, was primarily an extension of the former. But when it came to the Legislative Council, the proceedings of which, unlike the Executive Council, was not behind closed doors, their efforts proved quite disastrous. Thus, at the most one can conclude they justified Minto's prediction only partially. Their inability to "compete" with the "professional politicians" as parliamentarians undermined any possibility of the nobles becoming a counterpoise to the leaders of the intelligentsia, as the authors of the Morley-Minto scheme had intended.

CHAPTER V.THE FREEDOM MOVEMENTS.

The twentieth century political history of Bengal was largely concerned with what have been popularly termed the freedom movements. These movements resulted in the severance of the sub-continent from the Empire and the division of it into two different countries with an international boundary splitting the province into two. The movements revolved round the activities of the Indian National Congress. The subsidiary activities of the swadeshi and boycott, the terrorist and the Muslim separatist movements were either led or inspired by different groups of Congressmen, or were a defensive mechanism to counteract the Congress Party's over-bearing influence. The thesis would be quite inadequate if an attempt to analyse the participation by the group under review in the various movements and their attitude towards them was left unexamined.

The success of the anti-Ilbert Bill agitation in 1883 demonstrated to the Bengali leaders the value of combination and organisation even more than it had done until then. This could be considered as the formal initiation of the movements that dominated the political history of the twentieth century. Surendranath Banerjea took advantage of the political climate created by the Bill, and within a year he initiated the Indian National Conference, the forerunner of the Indian National Congress, which met

at Calcutta. In the same year Hume addressed an open letter to the graduates of Calcutta University urging them to organise an association for the mental, moral, social, and political regeneration of the people of India. This, along with other factors, led to the emergence of the Indian National Congress.<sup>1</sup>

The first Indian National Congress met in Bombay in 1885. About the same time the second session of the Indian National Conference was held in Calcutta. The latter was, like its predecessor, a conference of all-India character, held upon the same lines. By then the potentialities of the movement had caught the imagination of other leading associations of Bengal. The second session found three leading associations situated at Calcutta working together to make it into a success. They were the British India Association, the Indian Association and the Central Mahomedan Association of Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> It was soon agreed that it was undesirable that there should be two such associations, the Congress and the Conference, working independently. Thus the two merged into the Indian National Congress the next year.<sup>3</sup> The Indian Association joined its ranks and became a subsidiary body of the Indian National Congress.

In the year 1886, the Indian National Congress met for the first time in Calcutta. The nobles

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1. Majumdar, Ray Chaudhuri & Datta: Advanced History of India, p.892.

2. S.N.Banerjea, p.98.

3. Majumdar, Ray Chaudhuri & Datta: Advanced History of India, p.892.



of Bengal welcomed it and participated in the meeting with unrestrained enthusiasm. According to Surendranath Banerjea, the British Indian Association, "the conservative conscience of the community, threw themselves heart and soul into the matter". In many ways they were at the forefront during the sitting. Raja Rajendralal Mitter was elected the chairman of the Reception Committee, and Joy Kissen Mukerjee of Uttarpara proposed the election of Dadabhai Naoroji as the President of the Congress. The Congress of 1887 was held at Madras. Though away from the home province, among the delegates from Bengal senior noblemen like Raja Kishori Lal Goswami and the Raja of Tahirpur could be found. In the year 1896 an Industrial Exhibition was organised by the Congress to give an impetus to Indian Industry. On being invited, Sir John Woodburn declined to open the function. As an alternative the Maharaja of Cooch Behar was requested to perform the task, which he did.<sup>1</sup> The Raja of Sovabazar also was an ardent supporter of the movement. In its early days he was a zealous worker. He even acted as its Honorary Secretary and Treasurer for a year. He cooperated with Hume and others in establishing the Bengal National League, and was the President of the Bengal Social Conference held at Calcutta as well as the Bengal Provincial Conference at Bhagalpore.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar

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1. S.N.Banerjea, pp.101, 102, 103, 108, 146.

2. The Bengalee: 6 Dec. 1912, p.2.

was another prominent supporter. The Director of Criminal Intelligence described him as a staunch supporter of the Congress and put him on the list of suspects for his sympathetic attitude.<sup>1</sup>

A close examination of their participation in the succeeding decades, however, reveals that in due course the nobles withdrew their support from the Congress. There was a gradual watering down of enthusiasm on their part. Even nobles such as the Maharaja of Kassimbazar who continued to contribute substantial sums of money to its funds did not speak in or attend the Congress meetings as an active member.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact they had withdrawn from acting in any executive capacity in the Congress organisation. Doubtless one came across the name of Raja Surja Kanta Guha Ray of Faridpur as a member of the Reception Committee in 1911.<sup>3</sup> But it is safe to assume that his name was added as an after-thought and that he played no significant role. That is apparent from the fact that his name was not included in the original list of office bearers and committee members. Indeed there was a total absence of any noblemen in the manifesto.<sup>4</sup> The nobles apparently continued to withhold their support until 1917. It is significant that the list of delegates comprised not a single nobleman from

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1. Carmichael to Hardinge 25 Aug. 1912, C.P.I.: 1912,  
Va 8, pt.I, p.133.

2. Ibid.

3. The Bengalee: 7 March 1911, p.5

4. Ibid: 3 March 1911, p.5.

1912 to 1917.<sup>1</sup> In the latter year Kumars Arun Chandra Sinha, Rajas Kanto Ray and Narmada Sanker Roy rejoined the ranks and attended the sitting as delegates.<sup>2</sup> But it is not possible to overlook the fact that the members of noble families who made the come-back were junior members rather than the noblemen themselves.

Throughout the period under review the nobles maintained this distance from the Congress movement. The question that arises is why this enthusiasm for the movement, which was noticeable at the beginning, decreased over the decades in such a pronounced manner rather than increased as the movement gathered momentum. As we have seen the activities of the Indian Association gradually convinced them that the leaders of the intelligentsia, who were primarily Congressmen, were not merely interested in battling against the monopolistic political hold of the alien rulers, but also aimed to wrest the leadership of the Bengal society at their expense. In short they had emerged as political rivals rather than political partners.<sup>3</sup> Their habitual attack on the landholders' community as being oppressive extortionists, their opposition to the landholders' representation and their attempt to replace Raja Reshee Case Law as the representative of the Indian

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1. I.N.C.R.: 1911-18.

2. Ibid: 1917, pp.5, 36, 38.

3. "The term politics is used to mean collective human action performed with a power perspective. In politics men aim at gaining authority and influence over certain areas of human activity". - S.N.Mukherjee: 'Class, Caste & Politics in Calcutta', ed. Leach & Mukherjee: Elites in South Asia; p.33.

commercial community in the Legislative Council, their attempt in removing the nobles from the mixed constituencies during the elections, their systematic belittling of the British Indian Association and other similar bodies, and their attempt to dislodge the Muslim nobles from communal leadership had convinced the nobles that the Congress was a threat to their hereditary prominence. Nobles such as the Nawab of Dacca felt that it was not possible for the nationalists to give proper advice to the Administration.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the leading noblemen began to feel that they were being used to further their own purpose by the Congress leaders. Only when the nobles' help was required to advance their own interest did the Congressmen seek them out together with their fellow zamindars for support. At other times it seemed to them as though they were under perennial attack. This once infuriated Maharaja Tagore into publicly remonstrating that "this constant attack on the Bengal Zamindars compels me to ask that if they were such a negligible quantity ... why is there such feverish anxiety to secure the signatures of the Bengal Zamindars to the Curtis scheme?"<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the Congress deviated further and further from the demand of forming a Federation of Greater Britain. By the turn of the century it had become obvious to all

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1. Dacca to Curzon 24 Feb. 1909, Letters: Curzon, Vol. 427, p.9.

2. The Englishman: 22 Nov. 1917, p.4.

that a gap had begun to open between the Raj and some of the educated subjects. Their first experiments in political organisation gave the appearance of being parallel to the demands of the traditional leaders. They too seemed to support the current Government and yet demonstrate their protests by leaving its side when aggrieved. But step by step, and with protestations of loyalty accompanying each move, the criticisms of the new leaders grew louder<sup>1</sup> until they seemed to many to be insincere and hypocritical. First the Congress converted their demand for better government to self-government within the Empire, which later took another step when leading Congressmen like Surendranath Banerjea, who had at first opposed the Home Rule movement, accepted it as the final goal.<sup>2</sup> This hardening attitude transformed them from 'critics' to 'rebels' in the eyes of the nobles. Their opinion was voiced by the Maharaja of Burdwan when he declared in a public meeting that as far as the political platform was concerned people such as Rash Bihari Ghose and himself, more often than not, did not sit together.<sup>3</sup> Though it is possible to find conciliatory remarks from such senior noblemen as the Maharaja of Nashipur, who stated that he did "not think the supporters of Home Rule mean to have a rule by the people themselves without any British control,"<sup>4</sup> it would not be wrong to assume that such remarks were uttered with considerable mis-

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1. A.Seal: Emergence of Indian Nationalism, p.14.

2. The Englishman: 8 Oct. 1917, p.8.

3. The Bengalee: 18 Aug. 1912, p.1.

4. Ranajit Sinha: Reforms in the Administration of India, p.vi.

giving.<sup>1</sup>

What alienated the nobles even more than any factor mentioned above were the activities of the Bengal Congressmen in connection with the anti-partition movement. As the movement deteriorated from constitutional agitation to the application of more violent methods, the nobles gradually withdrew their sympathy from its cause. A time came when it was nearly impossible to separate the anti-partition movement from the "revolutionary movement" in Bengal. The latter was worked up on top of the anti-partition agitation. It started before the partition took place, and persisted even after it was reversed, but so long as the partition remained in force the two were very closely inter-connected.<sup>2</sup> According to Broomfield, the anti-partition agitation had four over-lapping phases. In the first, which opened with the publication of the initial partition scheme, its leader was Surendranath Banerjea. Against the partition he used press articles, public meetings of protest, petitions and deputations. Soon it was clear that the method had failed, and this realisation led to the second stage of the agitation in which verbal protests gave way to withdrawal of office holders from Government

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1. People such as Tilak would confess privately that they believed that British supervision over imperial subjects at least should continue for many years to come yet insist on working the masses up with fiery slogans and speeches demanding British withdrawal from India on the basis that by such means pressure could be brought on the bureaucracy to make it feel that all is not well. - H.W.Nevinson: New Spirit in India, p.72.
  2. J.C.Ker: Political Troubles in India, p.5.

institutions, the boycott of British products, the encouragement of swadeshi or indigenous goods, and the foundation of national education institutions.<sup>1</sup> The inspiration came from Bipin Chandra Pal, Aswini Kumar Dutt and Aurobindo Ghose. Under this leadership the agitation entered its third phase in which large bodies of Bengalis were trained for active participation in organisations of volunteer brigades, samitis, trade unions and gymnasiums. At the same time from the pens of Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal came a call for the revival of indigenous institutions and the use of traditional Hindu symbols to galvanize Bengal into action. At times it seemed as though they were speaking the same language as the nobles. But it soon became obvious that, although the means were the same, the aims were different. The authors of this revival provoked the fourth phase in which violence was openly preached by Barin and Aurobindo Ghose, whose pamphlets and newspapers glorified revolution as a religious duty. They reminded their readers that Kali was created by the Gods to destroy the demons who usurped their kingdoms<sup>2</sup>. All the leaders mentioned above were reputed Congressmen. The nobles' enthusiasm cooled with the increase of support for violence and the preaching of more vigorous agitation.

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1. Swadeshi and boycott must not be confused. The former was initiated earlier than the partition; the latter was a short term measure. But during the anti-partition movement the two were closely inter-linked, and it is difficult to examine them separately. The division of the movement into phases is for the convenience of study and not for chronological reasons. This way it is easier to examine the attitudes of the nobles towards the different aspects of the movement.

2. J.H.Broomfield, pp.29, 30.

At the beginning, prominent noblemen, along with the leaders of the intelligentsia, were at the very forefront of the anti-partition demonstration. The first one who showed his antipathy towards the partition scheme was Maharaja Surja Kanta Acharya of Mymensingh. He demonstrated his opposition during Curzon's visit to East Bengal. According to Surendranath Banerjea the Viceroy's visit was ostensibly with the object of ascertaining public opinion but in reality his motive was to over-awe the local people so as to frustrate any potential opposition to the proposed partition. If that was his intention he must have been sorely disappointed with the reaction of the Maharaja. He received Curzon with proper decorous and ceremonial hospitality in keeping with the tradition of the nobles but, at the same time, told the Viceroy "with quiet and dignified firmness that he would regard the Partition of Bengal as a grave disaster, and that he was opposed to it". Moreover, "throughout he remained a prominent leader of the anti-Partition agitation".<sup>1</sup>

Other nobles were not far behind in voicing their opposition to the contemplated scheme. They exerted themselves in mobilising public opinion against it. In a mammoth meeting organised under the presidency of Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee the Raja stated in no uncertain terms

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1. S.N.Banerjea, p.188.



that the partition would cause immense problems to the inhabitants of Bengal. The associations dominated by the nobles also joined the agitation against Curzon's proposal. "The representations of the British Indian Association put the case against the Partition in a very forcible manner".<sup>1</sup> Even many of the prominent Muslim nobles were against it at the initial stages. The Nawab of Dacca, the leading light of Muslim individuality, on receiving the information, described the act as "beastly".<sup>2</sup> "Nawab Khaja Athikulla, brother of the Hon'ble Nawab Sir Khaja Salimulla Bahadur, K.C.S.I. of Dacca, in moving the resolution against the Partition... observed: 'I may tell you at once that it is not correct that the Mussalman of Eastern Bengal are in favour of Partition of Bengal'." The same stand was taken by the Central National Muhammadan Association. In their memorial they stated "that no portion of Bengali speaking race should be separated from Bengal without the clearest necessity for such separation, and they think, in the present case, such necessity does not exist ". The last public demand before the partition became a reality was held at the Town Hall under the presidency of the Maharaja of Kassimbazar.<sup>3</sup>

When the Government, disregarding all attempts to

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1. The Bengalee: 14 March 1911, p.5.

2. H.W.Nevinson: New Spirit in India, p.191.

3. The Bengalee: 14 March 1911, p.5.

dissuade it, announced that Bengal was to be partitioned the prominent men of the province took on a more positive stance. A conference of the leaders was held at Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore's rajbari at Puthuriaghatta. The Maharaja took an active part in the deliberations.

Ultimately the Conference decided that the Maharaja should send a telegram to the Viceroy praying for a reconsideration of the orders passed. The conference was followed by almost daily meetings which were often held at the residence of the Maharaja Surja Kanta Acharya of Mymensingh. It was at a sitting held at the Maharaja's rajbari that the celebrated decision in favour of abstaining from the purchase of British goods and their replacement by indigenous products, so long as the partition was not withdrawn, as a protest against the indifference shown by the British public in regard to Indian affairs, and the consequent disregard of Indian public opinion by the current Government of India, was taken.<sup>1</sup> To make it really effective the impetus to encourage indigenous production and establish Indian institutions as alternatives to foreign enterprises was greatly increased. Thus swadeshi and boycott became an important aspect of the anti-partition agitation.

Had the senior nobles been opposed to the swadeshi and boycott scheme, the agitation might have been restricted to the intelligentsia. But as they were not,

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1. S.N.Banerjea, pp.187-189, 192.

it was inevitable that sympathy for that measure of agitation would gradually spread into other noble households also. The realisation of this greatly perturbed the Authorities. Even the women folk of the noble families were being caught up in the rising enthusiasm to support swadeshi. The ladies of Bhukailash family were at the very forefront. The Bhukailash Raj had been partitioned into three and placed under the Court of Wards, as the proprietors were purdanashin ladies. The estate known as Bhukailash III was represented by Srimati Abhash Kumari Devi with two daughters and a son. Cornelia Sorabji, the Lady Assistant of the Court of Wards, was greatly troubled and had to exert herself to counteract the possibility of her succumbing to the influence of "swadeshi agitators".<sup>1</sup> The Jandazar Estate made her even more worried. The owner was a young widow named Sindhubala. She was reported to have sold her jewellery to contribute towards the "swadeshi" movement. She had further enrolled her daughter into a vernacular school in spite of some inconvenience to herself with the primary intent of keeping her "fiercely swadeshi!" It was quite difficult for the Lady Assistant to persuade her to change her mind and have the child sent to the Diocesan School instead.<sup>2</sup>

The incident that perturbed the Authorities most was the involvement of the Hatwa family with the swadeshi agitators. While Bihar was still a part of Bengal the

1. 'E.Beng. & Assam Court of Wards Lady Asst. Annual Report 1909-10', R & S.D.P.: 1911, Vol.894, File 391, p.12.
2. 'Lower Province Court of Wards Lady Asst. Annual Report 1909-10', Ibid, no page number.

Hatwa estate was one of the largest zamindari of the province and the Maharaja ranked amongst the most senior nobles of the land. In 1896 the estate had devolved on a child of three placed under the care of his mother the Maharani. After the partition it came to light that the Maharani was bringing the young Maharaj Kumar "up to regard all officials, from the Lieutenant Governor downwards, with distrust and animosity, and were inspiring him with feelings of hostility towards the Government itself". Moreover, it was reported that the Bengali employees had formed a secret society to which the Maharani had supplied large sums of money. The Commissioner of the Division reported that if the Maharaj Kumar followed his mother he would fall under the spell of the disaffected people permanently. He urged that the Maharaj Kumar be quickly removed from Hatwa and sent to the Mayo College at Ajmer as a resident student. The recommendation was promptly complied with.<sup>1</sup>

The nobleman who not only perturbed but actually annoyed the Authorities by his participation in the swadeshi and boycott movement was the Raja of Narajole. Maulvi Muzhurul Huq reported to the Joint Magistrate of Midnapore that in the enquiries carried out in connection with the Midnapore bomb conspiracy, it had been found that the Raja was implicated. Immediately,

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1. Gourley to Sec. Rev. & Agri. Ind. 17 Oct. 1910, R.L.:  
Vol.134, lt. no. Land Rev. 2129T-R, pp.1-3.

a warrant was issued and the Raja put under arrest. After being taken into custody, he was escorted to the Kesabpur Kutcheri in an open carriage. En route, it began to rain and somebody held an umbrella over his head. A policeman reacted by snatching it away and put a blanket over his head, thus forcing him to travel like a common criminal. Moreover, they refused him bail until the Vacation Bench of the High Court released him. It was further alleged by the Indian press that during the interval he was confined to a dark, dingy, narrow cell with a toilet inside in the manner of a common prisoner.<sup>1</sup> The anger of the police becomes understandable when one takes into account that one of the witnesses had informed that the Raja was seen participating in a demonstration with Khudiram Bose, the celebrated terrorist, and singing national songs.<sup>2</sup> Under such circumstances, the police would inevitably treat him in a harsh fashion as they were the greatest sufferers at the hands of the terrorists. How much truth there was in the allegations that he was actively involved in terrorist activities or that the police maltreated him while in custody is not possible to ascertain. What was true though was that the Raja himself maintained in his appeal to the High Court

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1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 21 Sept. 1912, pp.1125, 1126.

2. The Englishman: 2 Feb. 1911, p.8.

that it was very hot and the police refused to provide him with even a hand fan. He also stated that he paid Rs.24,000 as a bribe to the police which they accepted but did not provide any comforts.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately he was released on the grounds that there was no reliable evidence against him.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the lack of evidence very few were convinced that the Raja was totally innocent of harbouring sympathetic views for the terrorists. This was so because his involvement in the swadeshi and boycott movement was somewhat passionate and unrestrained. He used his full influence with his tenants in order to induce them to give up the use of articles of British manufacture.<sup>3</sup> He personally corroborated this when he wrote in a memorial to the Viceroy that he had incurred the displeasure of officials because he had taken such a prominent part in reviving the dying industries of the country. He claimed that he had taken advantage of the partition as it offered greater facilities for the development of indigenous industries and, with this end in view, had taken part in certain meetings advocating the use of indigenous goods.<sup>4</sup> Under the circumstances, though he was discharged by the Court, for insufficient evidence, he was not left totally unpunished for his indiscretion. The Authorities attempted to decrease his eminence and thus curtail his influence in the locality. First, he was

1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 4 Jan. 1913, p.12.

2. Ibid: week ending 21 Sept. 1912, p.1125.

3. 'Quinquennial Admin. Rep.Burd.Div.1905-10', B.G.P.: Sept.1911, Vol.8677, p.86.

4. The Englishman: 28 Dec. 1912, p.3.

excluded from the Royal Reception, the most important social function of the decade. Moreover his attempt to become the chairman of the Midnapore Municipality was vetoed by the Additional Magistrate,<sup>1</sup> and the Raja of Mahisdal was given the title of Raja Bahadur: this last move removed the Raja of Narajole from the highly esteemed position of premier nobleman in Midnapore.<sup>2</sup>

The Maharaja of Kassimbazar was another nobleman who exerted himself in encouraging swadeshi enterprises and in the process had the unpleasant experience of getting his name blacklisted in the C.I.D. files for his efforts. Nawab Shamsul Huda once pointed out in the Bengal Landholders Association that the Maharaja started many enterprises "merely for the purpose of encouraging others".<sup>3</sup> He even came to the rescue of Indian enterprises if he found them in trouble. Some time before the decade under review the Raja of Sovabazar had helped to develop the daily Bengalee and the Amrita Bazar Patrika.<sup>4</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar went a step further. When the Bengalee began to flounder in 1919, he provided the necessary funds to salvage it, and became its joint proprietor under conditions which converted it into a limited company.<sup>5</sup> His efforts to encourage swadeshi

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1. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 6 July 1912, pp.406,407.

2. Carmichael to Hardinge 11 Apr. 1913, C.P.I.: 1913, Vol. Va 9, pt.I, p.214.

3. The Englishman: 1 July 1911, p.3.

4. The Bengalee: 6 Dec. 1912, p.2.

5. S.N.Banerjea, p.173.

enterprises not only attracted the admiration of his fellow zamindars like Nawab Shamsul Huda but also won him glowing praise in the columns of the press controlled by the intelligentsia.<sup>1</sup> He was held in no less esteem by senior officials of Bengal like Swan,<sup>2</sup> Duke and Carmichael<sup>3</sup> for his endeavours. His swadeshi activities were so prominent that the Germans mistook him for a rebel and invited him to join them in their war against the Empire.<sup>4</sup>

The nobles also gave their full support to national institutions, early in the twentieth century. One such example came to the limelight and this was the National Medical College of India. Dr. S.K. Mullick had opened it with 150 students at 191 Bow Bazar Street. It comprised 25 beds and a small out-patient department. The college proposed to impart knowledge of both allopathy and the ayurvedic and hakimi systems of medicine.<sup>5</sup> It soon grew in proportion and had 3,000 students within a year of starting. It also provided scholarships to Indian students to go to England for further studies in medicine. There was a finance control committee of four members to handle its finances and incoming contributions of which Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee was a prominent member. Moreover, senior noblemen sat on its council. They were the Rajas

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1. The Bengalee: 4 Jan. 1913, p.4.

2. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 24 Apr. 1915, p.617.

3. Carmichael to Hardinge 17 March 1914, C.P.I.: 1915, Vol. Va 13, pt.I, p.204.

4. German Letters to Indian Princes: 1914-16, pp.9,11.

5. Gov. to Sec. St. 17 Sept. 1913, R & S.D.P.: 1913, Vol.762, File 4510 (Enclo.), pp.3,7,9,11,17.



of Mymensingh, Darbhanga, Dinajpur, Kassimbazar and Dighapatia, Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee and the Nawab of Bogra. Its first foundation day was celebrated with Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee in the chair.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar continued to provide it with funds for many years to come;<sup>2</sup> along with Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee he remained in the governing body for some considerable time.<sup>3</sup>

Thus it appears that the nobles of Bengal were very much in favour of Swadeshi. Even when the movement got enmeshed with boycott they continued to support its cause. It was only when swadeshism became associated with violence and hooliganism that they turned their backs on it. The Maharaja of Kassimbazar clarified what true swadeshism was in their view, when he stated that it "was quite different from the Swadeshism that is identified with boycott and picketting".<sup>4</sup> With the possible exception of the Raja of Narajole the nobles in general considered swadeshi and boycott worthy of encouragement but not boycott and picketting. The Maharaja of Burdwan, when commenting on Tata enterprises, brought this attitude into clear focus. He stated that, "It is a pity such projects are not more plentiful in India. If those in India who are constantly clamouring for Swadeshi

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1. Ibid.

2. The Englishman: 15 May 1911, p.7.

3. The Bengalee: 4 May 1911, p.7.

4. The Englishman: 21 Aug. 1911, p.6.

industries were able to show deeds instead of empty words, we should materially advance the Mother Country." Commenting on British industries he later added that Indians "must produce the intellect, the energy and the capital to start such undertakings all over India on a sound and lasting footing. My brother countrymen who show their energy for Swadeshism by encouraging hooliganism in the name of exclusive dealing, should go to places like Bury to see for themselves the qualifications and spirit which could justify true Swadeshism. Outcries of Bande Matarm<sup>1</sup> cannot advance India nor the Indians, but talent, culture, brains, and money, all these must form a part of national advancement".<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately swadeshism and boycott initiated jointly by the nationalist leaders and the Bengal nobles as a protest against partition lost its original colouring and came to seem like an extension of the terrorist movement. The swadeshi movement was apparently being used by the unscrupulous to encourage strife. A time came when it did become practically impossible to draw a line between the terrorist and the swadeshi worker. The moderate leaders claimed that they advocated swadeshi and denounced terrorism. But whether moderate or extremist it was difficult for the nobles to overlook that they all were members of the Congress. As both sections belonged to the same fold, and gave the appearance of being inter-dependent, the claim of the moderates

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1. Bande Mataram had become the slogan of the disruptive elements.

2. B.C.Mahtab: Impressions, pp.2, 164.

that they were opposed to violence seemed hypocritical. It was this that created the apparently unbridgeable gap between the nobles and the Congress for the entire decade under review.

Terrorism, which was plaguing the province, was abhorred by the nobles. It gained in proportion because of the partition. When anti-partition agitation was just beginning Barendra Kumar Ghose, the inspirer of organised terrorism, returned to Bengal. He and his associates started the Jugantar, advocating total independence, and collected weapons to initiate a systematic terrorist movement. The persons involved spoke in English or chalit-bhasha, dressed in a uniform fashion, and vowed to destroy the British Raj by any means.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the Swaraj idea was formally introduced to Bengal local leaders at the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in 1906 by Dadabhai Naoroji.<sup>2</sup> Thus the two sided attack on the British Raj by the extremists and the moderates intensified the bitterness expressed by the Bengali people towards foreign rule and foreigners in general. The symptoms were markedly noticeable in the capital city itself. Calcutta was in a most unsatisfactory condition. Fleetwood Wilson reported that he was daily appealed to by the leading tradesmen to urge the Government to protect them from the uprising of the Bengalis which they anticipated. It was a common thing

1. Rep. Sedition Com. 1918: Chelmsford, Vol. 43, pp.11-14,16,19.

2. J.C.Ker: Political Troubles in India, p.6; This is a typical example where the moderates' move gave strength to the terrorists.

during that time to see Europeans being pushed off the pavements and their women jeered at in a most offensive manner by the students of the city.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the revocation of the partition, during the period under review the same trend continued unabated. Matters became even more explosive with the price rise caused by the War. Fish and meat were extremely scarce. Rui fish sold at from 12 annas to a rupee per seer. The supply of Hilsa fish was extremely scarce and other popular fish were almost equally dear. The prices of necessities of life other than foodstuffs were also very high. Even house rents were rising.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless there were fluctuations in food prices. But even when the price of rice was comparatively low the rayats were unable to reap its benefits. Because of the stoppage of the sale of jute they were impoverished and could not afford to buy even the cheap rice available in the market.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, many of the German owned enterprises like the hide trade, had been closed down leaving a large number of people unemployed.<sup>4</sup> When Chelmsford came to Bengal in 1916, he found the situation explosive. For some time a discussion had been going on between the India Office, the Government of India and the Bengal Government on measures to cope with the seditionists in the province. He decided to expedite the matter and take strong action

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1. 'Transfer of Capital 1 Jan. 1912', Official Notes: Fleetwood Wilson, Vol.15, pp.2-8.

2. Nat.N.P.: week ending 10 Oct. 1914, p.1073.

3. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 27 March 1915, p.480.

4. Carmichael to Hardinge 6 Sept. 1914, C.P.I.: 1914, Vol. Va 12, Pt. I, p.165.

to curb the disorder.<sup>1</sup> Even the King, though a constitutional monarch, was so concerned by the prevalent situation that he defied traditions and personally instructed Ronaldshay to be firm with the terrorists as "extremists required to be dealt with rigorously".<sup>2</sup> The culmination of this attitude was the appointment of the Sedition Committee to look into the entire problem of terrorist activities in the country. It assessed that between 1906 and 1918, 311 outrages had been committed in Bengal. It was not just the number that made it such a vital problem but "The list of crimes perpetrated was as appalling as the brutality with which they were committed, and the material before the Committee showed how widespread was the criminal organisation and how venomous was the revolutionary propaganda conducted in schools and colleges".<sup>3</sup>

It has often been argued that the revolutionary acts were carried out by a handful of Bengalis and that the moderate Congress leaders had nothing to do with it. Such were the very words used by Surendranath Banerjea on behalf of the Indian Association in their address of welcome to Chelmsford.<sup>4</sup> What is overlooked is that, though they may not have received open support from the moderates, it was common knowledge that the terrorists

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1. Chelmsford to King 21 May 1919 L & T (India), Vol.1, pt.II, p.31.

2. Bengal Diary: Zetland, Vol. 1, p.1.

3. Moral & Material Progress of India: 1919, p.25.

4. Speeches: Chelmsford, Vol.1, pp.200-201.

received sympathy from the intelligentsia in general.

The considerable daring shown by some of the participants, and the feeling that they were motivated by a genuine sense of patriotism evoked a measure of sympathy even among many of the mature men of the educated section. Moreover, among students and school boys they were regarded in the light of self-sacrificing heroes.<sup>1</sup>

Legends of glory and courage began to be woven round their activities.<sup>2</sup> Despite the knowledge that the terrorists were disrupting law and order the reason for this sympathetic attitude was summed up in an editorial in the Bengalee in 1915, when it published that "At the back of every form of political criminalism there always stands some sense of wrong or injustice, whether real or fancied."<sup>3</sup> The paper further elaborated that "The accuseds in most cases are young people, sometimes mere boys, and the fact that they have weeping mothers praying for their acquittal touches the inborn instincts of every mother in the community. The sentiments of the ladies receive support from the men of the family. All these things work together to create a general sympathy for accused persons in many political cases."<sup>4</sup> Moreover we are already

1. Viceroy to Sec.St. 24 Nov.1916, Correspondence with Sec. St. on Post War Reforms, Vol.33, Lt.no.17, p.4.
2. Such legends were in circulation even during the author's childhood. The fabulous exploits of Kudiram while the police searched for him in vain, how he escaped from a closely guarded van after being captured, and how, ultimately, he prevented the British hangman from taking his life by releasing the scaffold's trap door himself, were common household tales. Similar stories about Bagha Jotin were also in circulation.
3. The Bengalee: 2 Apr. 1915, p.4.
4. Ind. owned Eng.N.E.: week ending 10 Apr. 1915, p.214.

aware that the moderates often found it expedient to bow to the pressure of the extremists like Bipin Chandra Pal who proclaimed that the terrorists who shot down fellow Indians were "revolutionary patriots". The journal he edited, called New India, seemed to have a settled policy to publish every tale that could be found and exaggerated to fill the Indian mind with the bitterest and profoundest contempt for Europeans, and to urge Indians to train themselves to fight these "blackguards".<sup>1</sup> The attitude of such Congressmen, and the apparent inability of other Congress members to contain them, provoked many like the editors of the Nayak to query whether "it was impossible for our leaders, to stamp out anarchism, or whether they wilfully kept idle."<sup>2</sup>

This tacit consent of the Bengal Congress leaders, whether moderate or extremists, appalled the nobles, and persuaded them to turn their backs on the Congress movement which they once supported. Not only would such disruption of Law and Order jeopardise their own well being, but they also realised that it was causing the Indian people a great deal of trouble and loss of reputation. Thus unlike the moderate leaders of the intelligentsia, the nobles and their fellow zamindars came

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1. J.C.Ker: Political Troubles in India, p.x.

2. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 4 Nov. 1916, p.1473.

out into the open to try to contain the influence of the terrorists from spreading any further. Their move was not a mere gesture without substance since it was possible for them to make a stand against the nationalists. The large majority of the people of Bengal were not the English educated section, dominated by moderate Congressmen, but illiterate cultivators. Moreover in the Eastern part of the province, most were Muslims who did not follow the lead of the Congress. Furthermore the influence of the nobles even over the local intelligentsia, especially in the rural areas, was considerable.<sup>1</sup> It was in these spheres that they concentrated their efforts. As early as 1906 it had begun to dawn on them that the agitational spirit was being fostered from Calcutta. When an agitator came to the mufassil on tour he spread unrest wherever he went.<sup>2</sup> Reacting to this, nobles such as Nawab Serajul Islam suggested that quick action was called for to counteract the "wire pullers of Calcutta" who were creating discontent in the mufassil.<sup>3</sup> In their opinion, these people who spread discontent were not only Hindus. Muslims who had joined the ranks of the intelligentsia were also

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1. Discussed in fuller detail in Chapter II.

2. Hare to Dunlop Smith 19 Sept. 1906, Letters: Morley, Vol. 9, p.65.

3. Serajul Islam to Hare 28 Sept. 1906, Ibid., p.90.



to blame. The Nawab of Dacca emphasised that it was not true that Muslims were discontented when misled by Hindu leaders only.<sup>1</sup> Thus the nobles exerted themselves over the people they could influence so as to limit the spread of terrorism as elaborated below.

In the early stages the Maharaja of Burdwan apprehending the possibility of the nobles losing sight of the swadeshism and being ensnared by seditious doctrines instead, appealed to the "Rajas and Maharajas" not to be "led by the collar by the Bengali Newspaper Wallahs...For are not we the real representatives of the people? Should we not raise our voice against the several wrong-headed movements that are every day compromising the unsuspecting people of Bengal in the eyes of the rulers? How can we better do so than by proving to the latter that the masses never dream of questioning the intention of the Government, or of sitting in judgement on its actions".<sup>2</sup> In time the nobles as a group fell into line with his sentiments and took to restraining the spread of terrorism.

The Maharaja of Burdwan was adamantly against the tendency of airing national grievances by the assassin's weapons. It merely led to "compromising the unsuspecting

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1. Carmichael to Crewe 26 July 1913, Letters Carmichael:

Crewe, Box c/6.

2. B.C.Mahtab: Studies, pp.66, 67.

people of Bengal in the eyes of the rulers". During one occasion, finding the Lieutenant Governor, Andrew Fraser, in line of an assassin's gun, he frustrated the attempt by throwing himself in the line of fire and receiving the bullet himself.<sup>1</sup> He was convinced that the root cause of such evil was the introduction of over-westernised ideas by people who had lost sight of

the local background. This had weakened the foundation on which the Indian society was built. At times he himself found it very difficult to put aside his western views in favour of local customs. Writing about his daughter's marriage at a relatively young age, he informed Ronaldshay that, although he personally found it distasteful to do so, he feared the possibility of the family being outcasted and provoking the displeasure of his old father if he decided otherwise.<sup>2</sup>

Doubtless, he believed that caste solidarity and respect for the karta of the family were two very important factors which prevented the multi-racial Indian society from falling apart and leading to chaos. The people who neglected to keep in mind such local background endangered the very foundation of society. In a letter to Curzon he wrote that a "radical Englishman" tended to forget that to encourage Indians to demand privileges unsuitable for India caused the nation

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1. Nat. N.E.: week ending 1 July 1911, p.799.

2. Burdwan to Zetland 1 Jan. 1919, Correspondence: Zetland, Vol. 5, p.47.

to decline rather than progress.<sup>1</sup> A year later he lamented that terrorism had come to stay in Bengal and that thanks to the so-called nationalists no one's life was safe anymore. Although he received letters threatening his and his family's lives if he acted against them he exerted himself and persuaded the principal nobles of the province to forward a representation to the Government to take stronger action against the terrorists.<sup>2</sup> By 1911 he was hoping that the Authorities would look at the problem more seriously and lay down a clear and firm policy against the terrorists as he realised that the police were thoroughly dissatisfied with the undefined policy of the Government.<sup>3</sup> The dissatisfaction of the police would undoubtedly cause misgivings in the ranks of the nobles as the maintenance of law and order in the Bengal mufassil was the joint responsibility of the police and local elements such as themselves and their prominent prajas.

The indigenous system of police was organised on the basis of land tenure since ancient times. In the pre-British era the zamindar was bound to apprehend all disturbers of the public peace. Under them were numerous tenure holders who were required to assist in police duties. Finally there was the responsibility of the villagers which was enforced through the headman. The British relieved the zamindars of this police service. After a brief experimental period, in 1814 it was decided that the old village system was more effective as it secured the cooperation of the people. Thus it was re-introduced though the zamindars were not re-invested with police powers

1. Burdwan to Curzon 14 Aug. 1907, Letters: Curzon, Vol. 426, p. 69

2. Burdwan to Curzon 24 June 1908, Ibid, p. 74

3. Burdwan to Curzon 3 Aug. 1911, Ibid, p. 107

officially. The Police Commission of 1903, chaired by Andrew Fraser, was also "strongly convinced of the impossibility of carrying on an efficient police administration by means of official policemen only. It is absolutely essential to secure the aid of the village community". Hence, though not officially recognised this attitude signified the continuance of de facto police function of the large zamindars. Although the local police was under the jurisdiction of the magistrate, "it remained in some respects the private servants of the zamindars". This was largely ascribed to the power of the nobles to influence the local populace. Moreover, despite the Administration's contrary stand, the local officials continued to hold the zamindar in his personal capacity responsible for giving information of crimes and for helping to arrest the perpetrators.<sup>1</sup> Such being the case, although the Government at times considered sidestepping the zamindari system to strengthen the powers of the police,<sup>2</sup> it was difficult to do so for financial and other practical reasons. On the contrary it continued to strengthen the local elements. With this intention in mind

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1. Rep. on Indian Police Com. 1902-03: Curzon, Vol. 706,

pp. 4, 6, 7, 22. 28-30

2. H. Chakrabarti: 'Government & Bengal Terrorism', B.P. & P.

July-Dec. 1971, p. 168

the Government decided in 1913 to issue arms licenses more freely.<sup>1</sup> This was done because surveillance in villages was still entrusted to the headmen, the panchayats and the watchmen who were furnished with lists of known criminals residing within their jurisdictions so that they could keep a watch on them.<sup>2</sup> All such people still remained under the traditional authority of the local noblemen. Moreover, the nobles and their fellow zamindars utilised groups of followers popularly known as lathials to assert their authority and maintain order in their localities. The Nawab of Dacca once stated, "here in Dacca I have 10,000 men ready to die for me if I raise my little finger. That is how I keep the peace."<sup>3</sup>

The Maharaja of Nashipur was another senior nobleman who was at the very forefront opposing the terrorist tendencies. He was one of the first to respond to the need to act. He made several speeches in support of the Government and vigorously condemned the terrorists with the aim of persuading his tenantry to steer clear of their influence. He later felt that something further was necessary so that his appeal could be heard by a wider public. Thus he drew up and widely circulated a pamphlet within his zamindari for everyone to read.<sup>4</sup> The Raja of Hetampur was another who gained the reputation of having put down all lawlessness with a stern hand throughout his zamindari and personally

1. Beng. Police Proceeding: March 1915, Vol.9648, p.89.

2. Ibid: Jan. 1915, Vol.9648, p.44.

3. H.W.Nevinson: New Spirit in India, p.199.

4. D.C.Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, pp.131,132.

saw to it that his prajas remained aloof of the political movements of the time.<sup>1</sup> Maharaja Tagore reviewing their efforts in striking down terrorism in contrast to the moderate Congressmen ended by stating that "the Government can get... no help from the representatives of the people in combatting anarchy."<sup>2</sup> He later pointed out that those who were so loud in condemning the Government sponsored newspaper Sulabh Samachar "have so far done very little to check the prevalence of political crime."<sup>3</sup>

This contrast of efforts was noted not merely by their own spokesmen but by other sections of the community also. The Englishman, airing the opinions of the Europeans in Bengal, published in 1917 that "The zamindars contributed more than a quarter of the total revenue of Bengal from all sources. There are the present day leaders who do not contribute a single nickle penny, either by way of income-tax, cess or local rates. The irresponsibility of the leaders is in inverse proportion to their stake in the country."<sup>4</sup> Carmichael, voicing the official appreciation praised the zamindars' efforts in the Legislative Council in the same line as the above, It is not only from European sources that one can assess their effectiveness. Such opinions can be read in the Indian press also. The Dainik Chandrika reporting on the speech of Carmichael advised the Government to avoid divesting the zamindars of their authority any further as "it is the aristocratic

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1. Chiefs, Nobles & Zamindars, p.499.

2. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 15 Apr. 1911, p.165.

3. Nat. N.P.: week ending 22 Apr. 1911, p.453.

4. The Englishman: 24 Nov. 1917, p.8.

zamindar families who have always been the leaders of the Hindu society in Bengal. It is because they have been allowed to lose their position that anarchy and unrest are now rife in the country." <sup>1</sup>

The culmination of their attempt to contain terrorism was the formation of the Imperial League. It was the brain child of the Raja of Chakdighi. Even before the reunification of the province the Raja had attended two confidential conferences presided over by Fraser and Minto respectively to discuss the prevention of terrorism. Later the Raja proposed to his fellow Indians with similar views that they should create the Imperial League.<sup>2</sup> The League's other leading members were the Maharaja of Burdwan, Maharaja Tagore, the Nawab of Dacca, and the Raja of Bobbili.<sup>3</sup> Its declared objects were to disseminate the feeling of loyalty to the constitutional Government, to keep the people aware of the intentions of the Government and to combat misrepresentation.<sup>4</sup> The Maharaja of Burdwan as the president of the League amplified on its aim by explaining: "This League was ushered into existence at a time when there was a good deal of unrest and political discontent in the country, and when the anarchical movement, which came to all law-abiding Indians as a

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1. Ind.N.P. & Per.: week ending 26 Dec. 1914, p.1461.

2. S.& B.P. Singh Roy: Chakdighi Singh Roy.Family, pp.8,11.

3. M.Rahaman: Consultation to Confrontation, p.154.

4. 'List of Associations', B.P.P.: Sept. 1911, Vol.8683, p.47.

painful surprise, was at its height."<sup>1</sup>

Having founded an association where they could formulate concerted decisions, the nobles and like-minded leaders utilised every opportunity to propagate opposition to terrorist activities. The Maharaja of Burdwan and Maharaja Tagore, as the League's spokesmen sought official recognition for a loyal newspaper which it intended to publish.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the nobles utilised the other associations and societies in their control and public platforms at meetings they participated in at all opportunities to direct public opinion against what they considered wanton atrocities. One such occasion was at the All India Kshatriya Conference held in 1912. In a strongly worded speech as the president of the body the Maharaja of Burdwan told his fellow caste members that they should actively help eradicate this evil from the country. He concluded by stating that he hoped "that you will not fail to use your weighty influence to bear upon the young minds of our community and thus help to ward off the spreading of the evil amongst us".<sup>3</sup>

The vigorous efforts of the nobles persuaded Hardinge to suggest to the Maharaja of Burdwan that the leading men of the province should mix with their young fellow Indians and ascertain their wants, and generally prevent them from turning terrorists.<sup>4</sup> The Maharaja took the matter in hand and discussed it at the British Indian Association where a definite programme was formulated. The Maharaja as their president made a public

1. Speeches: Hardinge, Vol. Va 2, pp. 43, 44.

2. Nat.H.R.: week ending 15 July 1911, p.866.

3. The Englishman: 28 Dec. 1912, p.12.

4. Nat.H.R. & Her.: week ending 20 March 1915, p.425.



announcement of their conclusions on the subject. He proclaimed that the young men of the province had to be safeguarded against the snares and temptations which surrounded them. To do that the full cooperation of their guardians and their teachers were essential. He suggested that organisations of students and teachers be formed all over the province cooperating together in the interests of law and order and the peaceful and progressive development of the province. Moreover, the Association concluded that, along with the detection of crimes it was imperative to concentrate on character building of the rising generation. It urged the Government to remould the current system of education, which was not in keeping with the employment possibilities of the country. They also advised the leading members of the community to avoid confusing the youth with "hysterical outbursts of loyalty on the one hand and adverse criticisms in the Press on the other". Furthermore, the members personally took up the task of persuading students to avoid participation in politics.<sup>1</sup>

The Raja of Hetampur used his influence to the utmost in his zamindari to assure that the students in the High School and College remained away from the political movements that prevailed.<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja

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1. Ind. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 10 Apr. 1915,  
pp.213-215.

2. Chiefs, Nobles & Zemindars, p.499.

of Nashipur exhorted school boys on his estate not to mix in politics and explained to their tutors and guardians their heavy responsibilities in keeping the pupils and wards aloof from political agitations. Moreover in the pamphlet he circulated amongst his tenantry he wrote in rather strong language that "had these hot-headed boys turned their minds towards the welfare of their society and mother-land, without taking to these evil courses, they could probably have done immense good".<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja of Kassimbazar usually ended his speeches by sounding a note of warning against the danger of being imbued with terrorist ideas. He attempted to bring home to the students the fact that such ideas were not only improper and foolish from a common sense point of view, but also highly condemnable if viewed from a religious standpoint.<sup>2</sup> He even requisitioned the services of Prof. Samaddar of Patna College to write a series of books in popular English for presentation to schools. The books were to deal with the deeds of British personalities who established the British Raj. It was an attempt to counteract the distorted misrepresentation of British history being propagated by the extremists amongst the young. He hoped that in this way a spirit

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1. D.C.Boulger: Maharajah Devi Sinha, pp.132,133.

2. The Englishman: 24 Feb. 1917, p.3

of cooperation between the rulers and the ruled could be created.<sup>1</sup> Raja Reshee Case Law in his attempt to prevent the young from turning terrorists advocated that primary education should be confined only to reading and writing and elementary arithmetic. Moreover the time devoted to such training should be limited to two years. In this way it would not encroach upon the time of boys for work in their ancestral occupations thus avoiding the growth of unemployment. Haphazard education led to the unfortunate end where one found the young had lost their traditional knowledge and had acquired a taste for a standard of living for which they were not sufficiently trained. This led to frustration which in turn cultivated the seditious spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The Maharaja of Burdwan issued a letter to the parents and guardians of the boys about their training and discipline at home. He pointed out that in modern times, when there had been so much student participation in politics, it was desirable that they should not only be kept away from political demonstrations during their academical careers but also that it was necessary for the welfare of the country that they should devote their attention wholly to studies. While inaugurating the debating club of the Raj College and the Collegiate School he further emphasised the point by instructing the Principal and the Head Master that the

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1. Ibid: 20 March 1916, p.6.

2. 'Beng.Primary Education Bill 1917', B.L.C.D.:1919 p.183.

subjects of debates should always be chosen with care and caution. Although the boys should be helped in developing their oratorical powers, he felt that it would be injurious if their minds were polluted by the selection of such subjects which were unhealthy for them to discuss.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently the Maharaja was the only nobleman who appreciated the implications of the religious teachings and symbols which were being used to stir up terroristic instincts in the young. When he expanded the scope and popularised the study of Vedantic philosophy in his Raj Chatuspati<sup>2</sup> the Englishman was startled into remarking that there was a tendency amongst the Hindu leaders to reintroduce methods of education which dated back to almost prehistoric periods. "We even have so very modern and progressive a leader as the Maharaja of Burdwan lecturing boys on Karma and Vedanta philosophy"<sup>3</sup>. But his motive clarified over the years. In all his speeches to the students he harped on the fact that Indian boys, who had so much to look back to in their Puranas and Sastras and frame their characters from the lives of the ancients, should ignore the side which glorified discipline and uprightness in favour of violence and disruption.<sup>4</sup> It would not be wrong to assume that he was using the same teachings and symbols pushed forward by the extremists to counteract what he considered to be their distortion of facts. His vigorous activities against the terrorists persuaded the Bengal Government, supported by Chelmsford

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1. The Englishman: 2 May 1911, p.8

2. Ibid: 4 May 1914, p.5

3. Ibid: 5 May 1914, p.4

4. Ibid: 24 Apr. 1916, p.11

to recommend him for the Sedition Committee.<sup>1</sup> Apparently he was by-passed for people with legal trainings.

It is clearly noticeable that having decided to stand up against terrorism the nobles formulated a programme in accord with which they systematically pressured the Government to take a firmer stand against the terrorists and tried to mobilise public opinion against them. They used caste bodies, political associations, the public platform and educational institutes for this purpose. Assessing their capacity in this field, Hardinge in a reply to the Imperial League stated, "...much importance attaches in my opinion to that spirit which has inspired so large a number of gentlemen of influence and position to band themselves together in times of trouble...much of your power for good must be in the influence you are able to bring to bear, each in your own circle. Influence so exercised has a value which it is difficult to appraise too highly"<sup>2</sup>.

Thus we find that the nobles of Bengal first supported the Congress and only gradually withdrew their support as more and more party members were identified with using the swadeshi slogan for terrorist propoganda rather than for economic benefit of the people. Simultaneously the Muslim nobles found further cause to withdraw their support. Soon after the partition they began to doubt whether the Bengal Congress leaders were agitating merely with the intent of avoiding the racial destruction of Bengal. It

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1. Viceroy to Sec.St. 16 Aug.1917, Telegrams: Chelmsford,  
Vol.8 pt.II, p.328

2. Speeches: Hardinge, Vol.Va 2, pp.43,44

seemed to the nawabs that their motives could just as well be a desire to retain the advantage of educational and employment superiority in the province. Their support to Tilak's and Lajpat Rai's obvious use of Hindu symbolisms could not have helped to vitiate this doubt. Moreover the writings of Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal and Rabindranath Tagore were undoubtedly written with the intent of rousing the aggressive spirit of the Hindus of Bengal. A time arrived when the Muslim leadership was forced into taking a defensive stance against the Congress movement. It culminated in the inauguration of the All India Moslem League at the residence of the Nawab of Dacca. The League's primary raison d'etre at the initial stages was the maintenance of the integrity of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and the advancement of the Muslim population therein.<sup>1</sup>

It had often been maintained that "when Lord Curzon skilfully dangled before their eyes the picture of a prosperous Dacca, which meant the enhancement of the value of the Nawab's own property, these men came around and brought round with them most of their co-religionists."<sup>2</sup> It has also been suggested that the Muslims were bought over by the Authorities by advancing a large loan at a low rate of interest to the Nawab.<sup>3</sup> In fact the evidence available suggests that the main consideration taken into account was the steady influence of the Nawab. It was an effort to retain that influence unimpaired rather than

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1. M. Rahman: Consultation to Confrontation, p.7

2. Nat. N.P.: Week ending 8 July 1911, p.832

3. Nat. N.P.: Week ending 6 May 1911, p.524

purchase the support of a potential opponent. Even if he opposed an official move it is doubtful if he would ever turn into a seditionist. This is corroborated by the fact that another such loan was sanctioned in 1914 even though the Nawab had been openly condemning the revocation of partition for some time past and adamantly demanding special treatment of the Muslims to counteract the loss. Hardinge clearly stated on the loan issue that "the monetary aid granted to the Nawab has never been viewed in the light of an ordinary loan transaction.... The political importance, however, of averting the ruin of the Nawab was so pressing that this risk [loan with little security] was taken without hesitation. In the events which followed the partition of Bengal in 1905; in 1912 when provincial boundaries were readjusted; and again last year when Muhammadan feeling was roused, the Nawab placed himself on the side of law and order, and by his influence he succeeded in restraining his co-religionists in Eastern Bengal." Elaborating on the 1914 loan the Viceroy continued that "The political consideration which impelled us to come to the aid of the Nawab in 1907 and 1908 are equally strong now, and we consider it very desirable that his steady influence should continue to be exerted on the side of the Government."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, one must not lose sight of the fact that the first loan was granted in 1907. But the Nawab had already been publicly supporting the partition some time before that.

Even if one accepted the supposition that the Nawab's support had been purchased, to imply that the change of

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1. Viceroy to Crewe 14 May 1914, F.L.: 1914, p.2

heart of all the Muslim nobles was merely due to the prospect of the valuation of one of their fellow member's property going up would be incorrect. One person's growth of wealth would hardly suffice to persuade the group as a whole to oppose the Congress programme. Similarly to suggest that the change of attitude was due to the fact that one of them was forwarded a loan by the Government is just as fatuous. It would be more correct to say that it was primarily the realisation of the benefits that their community would derive from the partitioned province where they, rather than the Hindu-dominated Congress, would be the key group that brought about this change of attitude.

It is quite clear from the Nawab of Dacca's language in an article written soon after the partition that the above was so. He wrote, "There are many good things in store for us...and the Muhamedans being the largest number in the New Province, they will have the largest share.... This is the golden opportunity which God and His Prophet have afforded us, but if we do not now profit ourselves by the opportunity, we may not get another chance. Now or never. Our destiny is in our hands. We must strike while the iron is hot".<sup>1</sup> The opponents of the Nawab of Dacca and his associates, who consisted of senior Congressmen like Surendranath Banerjea, repeatedly stated that such was not the unanimous desire of the Muslims as Nawab Abdul Jabbar and the West Bengali Muslims were opposed to the idea of divided Bengal.<sup>2</sup> What they did not clarify was that though the latter claimed that the partition was injurious to the Bengali people

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1. K.Salimulla: 'The New Province', Journal of Moslem Institute, Apr.-July 1906, Vol.I no.4, pp.410-411

2. Nat.N.P: week ending 3 Feb.1912, p.145



they proposed that the remedy lay in transferring Burdwan and Presidency Divisions to Eastern Bengal and Assam.<sup>1</sup> Not once did they suggest that East Bengal should be rejoined to Bengal (West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa). If the former formula had been acted upon, the Bengali people would doubtless be reunited but the Muslim majority in the province would be retained. On the other hand the latter policy would allow the Hindus to regain their overwhelming majority. Thus we find that the nawabs, whether from East Bengal or West Bengal, were apparently striving to check the influence of the Hindu dominated Congress from reasserting itself. The Muslim nobles may not have doubted the Congress' sincerity if the so-called nationalists demanded the reunification of the Bengali speaking area where the two communities would be numerically at par. But unfortunately in their view the demands of the Calcutta intelligentsia did not appear to be so.

By the Darbar year the Nawab of Dacca and his associates were satisfied that their foresight had paid off. In 1911 he voiced his satisfaction in the Legislative Council by stating, "Can any impartial critic deny that our needs and requirements are now most sympathetically looked after? Education, industry, agriculture and what not have received the greatest impetus, and progress in all directions has been most remarkable."<sup>2</sup> Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri also claimed in a similar tone that "...it was only the

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1. Ibid: week ending 9 Dec. 1911, p. 1476

2. Ibid: week ending 6 May 1911, p.524

partition and the change of circumstances brought about by it that gave the Musalmans that sense of security and freedom, without which real progress was impossible." He further asserted that education had increased ten fold and even more during those few years.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from such benefits, the nawabs used the opportunity to decrease the new province's dependency on Calcutta. One such move was the attempt to form a separate High Court at Dacca. The newspapers reflecting the opinion of the Calcutta intelligentsia strongly opposed the move. The Bengalee maintained that "the educated community throughout the province is strongly, indeed vehemently, opposed to the proposal".<sup>2</sup> Many of the Dacca newspapers on the other hand disagreed with the above view. The Sanjivani replying to the surprise expressed by a Dacca newspaper at the opposition to the creation of a High Court at Dacca when such a move would give pecuniary advantage to the members of the bar and make litigation less expensive for the suitors stated that "the correspondent seems to be unaware that there is such a thing as unselfish regard to public interest".<sup>3</sup> However, the public interest to which the newspaper referred may well have been merely the interest of the Calcutta intelligentsia. The Samay and the Hitavadi took a similar stand,<sup>4</sup> as the other Calcutta papers. Reporting on the meeting called by the Nawab of Dacca to discuss the issue the Sanjivani threatened "that if he held one meeting, a hundred hostile meetings would be held.

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1. A.I.M.L. : 1916 (9 Session), 30 Dec.1916, pp.69,70
  2. Nat. owned Eng. N.P. week ending 24 June 1911, p. 266
  3. Nat. N.P.: week ending 1 July 1911, p.801
  4. Ibid: week ending 8 July 1911, p. 835

Let those who have the welfare of Eastern Bengal at heart protest strongly against this proposal that the Nawab will not dare speak a word."<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the opposition was aired by the Hindu-owned press of Western Bengal only.

Like the establishment of a separate High Court, the nawabs also put forward the need to form a separate university. They were not for the extension of free primary education though.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless one of the basic reasons for the negative attitude was that primary education would not help them achieve what they strove for. They aimed to increase advanced education so that the Muslims might catch up with the Hindu intelligentsia and remove the disparity that existed between the two communities. It was Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri who moved the demand which was carried unanimously at the All India Moslem League. He urged on the Government that there existed "the desirability of extending the operations of the proposed university over districts of Dacca, Rajshahi and Chittagong Division, so far at least as the general control and supervision of the educational institutions in those areas the prescriptions of the curricula of studies and the examinations are concerned".<sup>3</sup> Later in the columns of the Muslim Hitaishi he urged the necessity for a Muslim University in India, on the ground that the existing universities could not, as they were constituted, be expected to make a proper arrangement for the education of the Muslims. The Calcutta University, he emphasised, did not have a single

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1. Ibid: week ending 20 May 1911, pp. 588, 589

2. The Englishman: 18 Oct. 1911, p.7

3. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 8 June 1912, p.345

Muslim on the syndicate. Of 143 members of the Faculties only 8 were Muslims and not a single Muslim sat on its sub-committees.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the establishment of the Court and the University the Nawab of Dacca, and Nawabs Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri and Shamsul Huda relentlessly pursued the demand for reserved Muslim seats in the district, local and municipal boards<sup>2</sup> formulated by the Simla Deputation.<sup>3</sup>

When it became known that the partition was to be annulled the nawabs and their associates made a last desperate effort to hold off what in their view was the inevitable revival of Congress domination. At that time the Nawab of Dacca was very ill. In spite of that he braved all consequences and approached the Authorities. "When he left his house he was so weak that he could not walk and had to be carried in an invalid chair to the railway train from his carriage. He hoped to get an interview with Lord Crewe and voice his opposition to the scheme."<sup>4</sup> Although he was unable to persuade the Authorities to retract their decision he apparently got the opportunity to advise on their treatment of East Bengal when the partition was revoked. He put forward demands which he claimed were those of the people of East Bengal in general and the Muslims in particular. An examination of these demands shows that the petitioners wanted to undermine the possible influence of the Hindu leaders of West Bengal from spreading to the Eastern part of the province.

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1. Nat.N.P.: week ending 19 Aug.1911, p.1027

2. Ibid: week ending 22 Apr. 1911, p.448

3. M. Rahman: Consultation to Confrontation, App.I

4. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 16 Dec. 1911 p.563  
Vol. Va 6 pt. I

They said that the Governor should spend an equal amount of time at Calcutta and Dacca, that there should be separate electoral roles for the Legislative Council, the district and local boards, and the municipalities for the Muslims, that either a separate budget for East Bengal be prepared, or, alternatively, a Muslim from East Bengal be appointed Executive Councillor, and that special allotments be made in Government services for the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> In fact all previous demands were resurrected by the Nawab. Doubtless he hoped that in this way, despite the revocation of the partition, the possibility of the renewal of Congress domination, in East Bengal would be avoided. As the demands were not opposed to the Government's own way of reasoning most of them were acceded.

In spite of their bid to retain their sphere of influence the revocation of the partition marked a watershed for the nawabs of Bengal. It struck a hard blow on their near absolute hold over the Muslim population. It provided the Muslim intelligentsia the opportunity to strengthen their struggle for leadership with the nobles. Unlike the traditional leaders, the new group were not particularly opposed to the Congress movement. Indeed a number of them were members of the Moslem League, but not to the exclusion of their Congress membership.<sup>2</sup> The Mussalman, which reflected their views, in an attempt to discredit the position of the nobles, stated that though the reunification of Bengal

1. Dacca to Hardinge 20 Dec. 1911, C.P.I.:1911, Vol. Va6, pt. I p. 515

2. M. Rahman: Consultation to Confrontation, p. ix

had struck a cruel blow at Muslim progress the traditional leaders remained silent. It alleged that their silence was bought by a somewhat lavish shower of Darbar honours among the leading Muslims of the province.<sup>1</sup>

Such a stigma could be very damaging to the reputation of the nawabs. But apparently the Nawab of Dacca and his associates realised that to refute it openly by opposing the royal proclamation, without preparing the ground first, would lose them the support of the Authorities and place them at the mercy of the Congress. Under such conditions they could be swamped by the Hindu intelligentsia, defeating the very purpose that they were trying to achieve.

The opportunity to assure the Authorities of their loyalty came with the retirement of Dr. Ross as the Principal of the Calcutta Madrassah. The Nawab of Dacca thereupon wrote in the Englishman that "It may be questioned why the community did not protest against the retirement of Dr. Ross from the Calcutta Madrassah. The Mohommedans are not given to agitating even in regard to matters of vital importance to the community. They have an implicit trust in the Government, and they feel that nothing will be done which may tell on the welfare of the community"<sup>2</sup>. Later he had another opportunity when there was a move to amalgamate the Muslim associations of the two provinces into one cohesive body. During the occasion, the Nawab took a step forward in his presidential speech. He stated that "out of

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1. Nat. owned Eng.N.P.: week ending 3 Feb.1912, p.93

2. The Englishman: 19 Jan.1911, p.9

their loyalty and profound respect, and regard for the Throne, [the Muslims] felt that they had no other alternative but to desist from entering a protest" against the royal proclamation. But at the same time he put on record their deep regret at the modification of the partition.<sup>1</sup>

Only after having assured the Government, and thus having retained its good will, could the Nawab be sure of receiving sympathetic hearing when he launched into productive lobbying. But before that it was necessary to assess whether the Muslims would still accept him as their leader. That was made clear at the Bengal Presidency Mahomedan Conference. At the meeting Nawab Serajul Islam while proposing the Nawab of Dacca to the chair said, "Sir Salimulla has always taken a deep interest in the welfare of his co-religionists and has made many personal sacrifices and even risked his life for the good of his community. He will be the right man in the right place and our able pilot under whose skilful guidance, I hope, the ship of our community will steer clear of all shoals and rocks." Nawab Sujat Ali Beg while seconding the proposal stated, "To guide us, to advise us, how to achieve the union of the two Moslem Leagues of Eastern and Western Bengals, we could have no more sympathetic, no wiser mentor, than Nawab Sir Salimulla Bahadur of Dacca". Both remarks were received unopposed by the audience. During this meeting a section of the conference broke out in an uproar on the ground that they wished to disassociate themselves from the All India Moslem League, since it was run by a dictatorial leadership which ignored the needs of Bengal.

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1. Ibid: 1 Jan. 1912, p.5

For a moment it seemed that the conference would end in chaos. At this stage the Nawab of Dacca rose and "an appeal from him concluded in millifluous Urdu, asking them to be quiet served to pour oil over troubled waters and the excitement calmed down as if under the influence of the magic wand".<sup>1</sup> There was little doubt after that that his influence and prestige were still very strong with the Bengali Muslims.

Having established the grounds carefully it was time for him to take positive steps. The very next day, at the All India Moslem League, he made a powerful speech regretting the revocation of the partition. He emphatically maintained that it was a return to "a state of servile dependence on a dominant community". He further added "Those who are forced to give up a position of their long-enjoyed monopoly, however unjustifiable in nature and origin, will readily understand the feelings of our enemies after the Partition". Making it clear the the Hindu-dominated Congress was the enemy of the Bengali Muslims, he ventured to point out that unless the Administration changed its attitude it would appear that it had "put a premium on sedition and disloyalty, and created an impression in the mind of the irresponsible masses that even the Government can be brought down on its knees by a reckless and persistent defiance of constituted authority".<sup>2</sup>

The Nawab's strongly worded speech apparently disconcerted the Muslim intelligentsia. The Mussalman though being unable to deny the principle behind it, condemned the intensity of the language used by the Nawab. The paper expressed surprise

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1. The Bengalee: 3 March 1912, p.3

2. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 9 March 1912, p.172



that the Authorities took no action despite the ferocity of the speech.<sup>1</sup> It had overlooked that the Nawab had prepared his grounds very carefully before doing so. Once more the Nawab had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Muslim interest and pushed the leaders of the intelligentsia into the background. He had caught the interest of the Muslim community,<sup>2</sup> had counteracted the allegation that he had been bought off by high honours, and had retained the ear of the Government,<sup>3</sup> despite the vehement attack on its policy. The attempt of Suhrawardy and Rasul to rope the Muslims into the Congress party was foiled.<sup>4</sup>

It is significant that by the end of the year it was the Nawab of Dacca and his fellow noblemen who led the informal deputation of Muslim representatives that called on the Viceroy. All the previous demands were once more brought to the fore and given the same importance as before. They pointed out that it was essential to bring the Muslims educationally into line with the Hindus. Moreover, as long as they were not brought to the same level of progress they should be allowed to choose their own representatives in the Council, boards and the municipalities.<sup>5</sup> The Nawab later demanded that sufficient funds be allotted by the Government for the exclusive advancement of Muslim education.<sup>6</sup>

At this stage incidents both inside and outside India threatened to disrupt their programme by tarnishing their

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1. Ibid: week ending 16 March 1912, p.182
  2. It is obvious from the elections of 1912
  3. He was nominated as Muslim representative to the Legislative Council.
  4. Bayley to Hardinge 2 Jan. 1912, C.P.I.: 1912, Vol Va 7, pt. I, p.5
  5. Viceroy to Sec.St. 14 Nov.1912, F.L.: 1912, Vol 447, Lt 329, Enclo.1,p.1
  6. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 16 March 1913, p.182

carefully nurtured reputation, of the Muslims being a disciplined and law-abiding community in contrast to the Congress which apparently condoned terrorist activities. A section of the community began to show symptoms of extra-territorial allegiance to Turkey. The pan-Islamists began to teach that their first duty was loyalty to the Khalifa and founded a new organisation - Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba- whose members vowed to die for the holy shrines. At this critical juncture a mosque was demolished at Kanpur by official order, creating a tense and explosive situation.<sup>1</sup> Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury took on himself the responsibility to calm the ruffled feelings of the Muslim population of Bengal. Though a reserved person by nature he agreed to preside over the protest meeting called to discuss the issue. The Bengalee pointed out that it was no small credit "that he should have emerged from the seclusion of his quiet life to lead this great movement...Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will not fail to note this fact of tremendous significance".<sup>2</sup> In his presidential speech the Nawab tried to strike a balance between the officials and the people. While pointing out to the Government the follies of such thoughtless acts he simultaneously entreated his coreligionists to maintain self control so as not to gain the reputation of being agitators. As he was better known as a great landed nobleman rather than a politician,<sup>3</sup> his appeal could not be misconstrued by the people nor by the Government as that of a political opportunist.

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1. Ind.Constit.Ref., p.22

2. Nat. owned. Eng.N.P.: week ending 9 Aug. 1913, p.545

3. The Englishman: 31 Dec.1920,p.6

Moreover, he was greatly admired by his coreligionists as an ardent Muslim who had had the courage to stand out against non-cooperation. Doubtless his presence did a lot to prevent the Muslims from losing self-control and thus falling into the same level as the Congress agitators in the eyes of the Government.

Another such question which nearly caused the Muslims to turn violent was the interference in their right to sacrifice cows as kurbani during the Bakr Id festival. The East Bengal mullas were inflaming the minds of the Muslims and provoking them to turn violent against the interfering Hindus. The Nawab of Murshidabad prevented the situation from degenerating into a province-wide blood bath. To counteract the dangerous doctrine he issued a manifesto and requested his co-religionists to avoid bloodshed for such a purpose. His effort was made easier by the help accorded by the Maharaja of Burdwan, the premier Hindu nobleman, who made a gift of a camel to his Muslim prajas for kurbani.<sup>1</sup> The next year the Nawab stopped cow sacrifice in his killa-nizamat as an example of tolerance and compromise between the "two eyes of the community" and asked the Muslims to follow suit.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless this attitude of the Nawab, who was still considered their Amir-ul-Omra by the Muslims, helped pour oil on troubled water. In the year 1914 the Government was able to stop Bakr Id sacrifices altogether.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Nat. owned Eng. N.P.: week ending 30 Nov. 1912, p.731
  2. Nat. N.P.: week ending 23 Nov. 1912, p. 1373
  3. Ibid: week ending 21 Feb. 1914, p.162

In spite of their efforts the nobles could not retain the monopoly of leadership of the community for much longer. Too much of it was dependent on the influence and prestige of the Nawab of Dacca. Assessing his importance and influence in the Muslim community, Carmichael wrote, "The Nawab of Dacca died a few days ago. This will I fear give us a good deal of anxiety and perhaps trouble. He could and did control the Mohammedans in Bengal as no other man can. There will probably be disputes now among would be leaders, some of whom are anything but friendly disposed to the Government"<sup>1</sup>. This was so because many Muslims considered that they had been betrayed by the Government. A small group of younger professional men in Calcutta were insisting that the community must adopt a more aggressive stance if it were to improve its lot. The Nawab of Dacca and his supporters managed for a time to prevent any public dissent. But in the Budget debate in 1913 Fazlul Huq brushed aside the conventional approach and demanded compensation for the past ill treatment. Nawab Shamsul Huda was quickly on his feet to deny the allegation. But the response which Fazlul Huq's speech drew from various sections of the community suggested that there were many who thought as he did. Fazlul Huq brought a new style to Muslim politics in Bengal. Here was a political leader of the new kind. Unlike the traditional leaders, whose influence was locally based on landholding, he had made his way by personal ability. In many ways he reacted like the Congress leaders and like them his criticism was directed primarily at the Government. In 1915 the Nawab of Dacca died and many of

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1. Carmichael to Crewe 28 July 1915, Letters Carmichael: Crewe, Box c/6

those involved in the succession struggle that followed were younger members of the intelligentsia like Fazlul Huq. In the twelve months following the Nawab's death these men gained control of the Bengal Presidency Moslem League with Huq as secretary.<sup>1</sup>

The domination of the new group changed the programme of the Moslem League. The proceedings of the very next meeting convinced many like the Moslem Hitaishi that the League had deviated from the purpose for which it had been established by the late Nawab of Dacca. It gave the appearance of desiring to be one with the Congress which would inevitably result in their aims and objects becoming parallel.<sup>2</sup> The conservative nobles like Nawab Serajul Islam loudly proclaimed in vain that what was wrong with Home Rule in the form demanded by the Congress was that it would be detrimental to Muslim interests.<sup>3</sup> The Moslem League had turned away from the old principle of working out the salvation of the Muslim community without any interference from the Hindu dominated Congress. The Lucknow Pact changed all that and Hindu leaders could also be seen making political speeches in mosques. In exasperation Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury resigned as President of the Bengal Presidency Moslem League when the body embarked on political ventures which he was unable to countenance.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact the withdrawal of the nobles as a group was abrupt and significant. In the 1916 Session of the All India Moslem League the office bearers from Bengal were Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury and Nawab Habibullah Khan of Dacca.

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1. J.H. Broomfield, pp.64,65

2. Ind. N.P. & Per. : week ending 6 May 1916, p.650

3. Addresses Presented at Calcutta: Montagu, Vol.34, Memo

4. 'Enclo. to Letter to Y. Holderness 16 Ap.1918',  
Correspondence with Sec.St.:Chelmsford, Vol 4, pt.II, p.30

Moreover, in the list of members comprising twenty nine people the names of Nawabs Altaf Ali, Serajul Islam and Abdul Jubbar could be found.<sup>1</sup> By the following year, however, the League had decided to join hands with the Congress. It resulted in not a single nobleman from Bengal attending the session. The meeting resolved that a joint conference of the All India Congress Committee and the Council of the All India Moslem League would form an All India deputation to move a "Congress-Moslem League Scheme of Reform". Fazlul Huq and A. Qasim represented Bengal on the Committee.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate cause that forced Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury to resign was the Moslem League's disapproval of his conduct in the Imperial Council. He refused to sign the self-government memorandum submitted by nineteen elected members of the Council.<sup>3</sup> Amongst the signatories were M. Huque, Ibrahim Rahemtoola, Mir Asad Ali, Mohamed Ali Mohamed, and Jinnah.<sup>4</sup> The Muhammadi criticising the Nawab's non-cooperation queried his motive by stating, "All Indians are now praying for self-Government. We know that he is personally opposed to self-Government, but as a representative of Mussalmans and President of the Bengal Moslem League he ought to have signed."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the Moslem Hitaishi, supervised over by Nawab Shamsul Huda, appreciated his motive and a week later emphasised that the requested reforms would injure the interests of the Muslims. As an explanation it stated that the interests of the Muslims in the municipalities

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1. 'List of Office Bearers 1916' A.I.M.L.: Report, pp.6,15-17
  2. 'Tenth Session 1917', Ibid, App.E
  3. The Englishman: 16 May 1917, p.4
  4. 'Memorandum to Viceroy', G.B.R., Vol 51, p.257
  5. Ind.N.P. & Per: week ending 28 Oct.1916, p.1434

and district boards were not even then under official chairmanships, properly safeguarded. If those local bodies were allowed to be managed entirely by elected members and elected chairmen, as advocated by the memorialists, Muslim interests would be faced with the perpetual danger of being overlooked.<sup>1</sup>

Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury like the Nawab of Dacca after the revocation of the partition, realised that his reputation was at stake, and that the activities of the leaders of the intelligentsia were bringing the Muslim community once more to the brink of loss of identification. It was on the verge of being submerged in the Hindu dominated Congress movement. Belonging to the traditional school he did not react in haste. Instead he went about with great caution to prepare his ground first. Firstly, he clarified his stand to the Authorities by a separate memorandum. He explained that he was in accord with the signatories in every way; but found it necessary to withdraw his support as some of the proposals would give an undue advantage to a single advanced group. The Muslims in that case would be totally swamped.<sup>2</sup> He followed the above move with a detailed explanation to his constituency. He pointed out that the Muslim member in the Council "Stands on a very unstable ground. It is quite apparent that by himself he cannot do much. He is to enlist the sympathy of his colleagues of other denominations

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1. Ibid: week ending 11 Nov. 1916, p.1503

2. Chelmsford to Chamberlain 13 Apr. 1917 (Enclo. A)  
Correspondence with Sec.St. Chelmsford:Vol.II, pp.107-114

to carry out his point. But as it sometimes happens, his point of view more or less based on his communal needs,.... does not commend itself to others who being outside the fold cannot appreciate it to the desired extent." Thus in any future programmes "It must be clearly recognised that what India has to get in the shape of rights and privileges is to be adequately shared by various sections that comprise the Indian people." Having established his aim he pointed out that he had "Always placed it in the forefront of my aims, the advocacy of Muslim claims in all those departments out of of [sic.] public administration, in which I know as a matter of fact the Musalmans have not had their adequate share".<sup>1</sup>

His adamant perseverance and careful preparation paid off. In many respects the new leadership could not satisfy the Muslim demands. In 1918 many were looking for a leader who would not compromise with the Hindus. The man who supplied the need was Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury. At no stage had he had dealings with the Congress Leaders. In August 1918 he was elected the president of the Central National Mahommedan Association. As a member of the traditional school he appreciated the value of personal intercession at the highest level. Throughout 1919 by personal interviews and letters he kept up the pressure on the members of the provincial and Indian governments. Through the Central Mahommedan Association he organised Muslim conferences in various parts of the province, at which resolutions were passed disallowing the right of the

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1. Syed Nawab Aly: A Year on the Imperial Legislative Council, pp.ii,iii.



Moslem League to speak for the Bengal Muslims and urging the British to honour their pledges to the Muslim community.<sup>1</sup> The Bengal Moslem League held its 1919 sitting at Mymensingh. "As a counter-blast to the Moslem League, Nawab Nawabali Chaudhuri held a conference at Serajgunj under the auspices of the Central National Muhammadan Association. In a speech of considerable courage and ability he called upon all reasonable Muhammadans to form a moderate party and to break free from the designing influence of the Hindu politicians who had captured the Moslem League. In particular he protested against the admission of Hindus to Mosques for the purpose of addressing mixed audiences on politics".<sup>2</sup> His campaign was successful and he managed to bring back many of his co-religionists to the line formulated by the Nawab of Dacca and his associates. But it could not be denied that total control of the Muslims by the nobles could never be established again.

The above examination reveals the attitudes of the Bengal nobles in reference to the so-called freedom movement. When the Indian National Congress was launched they gave it their enthusiastic support. Many prominent noblemen actively participated in its formation and helped during its initial stages of development. When the Party launched the anti-partition movement on a large scale many senior rajas and nawabs worked shoulder to shoulder with the Party members. They advocated, initiated and supported many swadeshi enterprises in consequence of it. But as the swadeshi slogan got more

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1. J.H. Broomfield, pp.125-127

2. Bengal Diary Vol. I: Ronaldshay, Vol.I, p.229

and more embroiled with the terrorism prevalent in the province the nobles gradually withdrew their support. This was principally so because the revolutionaries were members of the same Congress Party to which the Moderates also belonged. Though the latter claimed abhorrence of such acts they apparently could neither denounce them as criminal activities nor reject the supporters of such acts from the Congress Party. Moreover, these extremists who put forward Hindu symbolisms to excite the masses into more vigorous agitation disturbed the Muslim nobles of Bengal. Because of this the latter felt the need to create a defence organisation against the apparent Hindu hegemony which such Congressmen seemed to advocate. This hardened attitude of the nawabs continued unabated even when the Moslem League they helped create for the above purpose showed symptoms of tendencies to fuse with the Indian National Congress. Thus it can be concluded that the overall effectiveness of the concerted activities of the nobles incited by their attitude made it possible for the swadeshi movement to avoid being totally identified with hooliganism and boycott, and prevented the possibility of terrorism overwhelming the province as a whole,<sup>1</sup> and prevented the Muslim separatist movement from losing its individuality to the Indian National Congress.<sup>2</sup>

1. According to the Sedition Committee at the very height of the movement (1906-1919) there were 311 political murders in undivided Bengal. In contrast to 265 in the first half of 1971 in W. Bengal alone according to the Guardian 15 June 1971. Without the restraining hands of the senior zamindars violence may have spread in the rural areas converting Eastern India into a place like Algeria making it impossible for Gandhi and his associates to launch the Satyagraha movement with success in Bengal and its environment.
2. But for the Muslim nobles there might not have been an East Pakistan or Bangladesh.

CONCULSION

The landed nobles of Bengal could not claim to be a nobility from a legal viewpoint. The British authorities had refrained from converting the Subedari nobility, which they had inherited, into an equivalent of the British nobility. Moreover, the baronial houses of the Nizam era, which had survived the attrition of time, had been trimmed of all the political power which they had once wielded. The noblemen had been officially reduced to the functional level of revenue agents for the Government on a par with other owners of agricultural estates.

Despite their degradation, the surviving members managed to retain their physical identity. Certain acts and attitudes of the paramount power helped them to do so. The British Government declared the Bengal landholders - both baronial and ministerial - to be proprietors of the territories in their charge by the Permanent Settlement and it continued to bestow the age old titles conferred on them by previous regimes. This arrangement justified the continuance of the use of noble paraphernalia despite the loss of baronial powers. In the eyes of the general public the old nobility appeared unaltered. This misconception was further buttressed by the fact that, though the British reduced their powers, the members were still addressed by the Administration as nobles, with all the accompanying

terminology generally applicable to persons of such status. So the nobles steadfastly continued to adhere to the old pattern of life and to instill an attitude of pompous superiority into succeeding generations. Thus, the aura of an indigenous nobility was never allowed to perish while the British administered Bengal.

This conscientious attachment by the surviving noble houses to the traditional life style of the Mughal period bore fruit. The new Administration invested many more personalities with, and declared others as hereditary holders of, titles considered either noble or royal by Indians throughout their history. These new recipients soon cultivated habits and life patterns similar to the earlier group. By the middle of the nineteenth century the individuals and families with rights to noble titles from both eras had merged into a reasonable homogeneous body in which it was practically impossible to distinguish between the behavioural patterns of the nobles who could trace their pedigree back to the pre-British days and those of the nobles who could not.

Irrespective of their antiquity, all the nobles resided in palatial buildings surrounded with princely pomp and splendour. The morning was heralded with the hoisting of their family colours amidst bugle calls and the ringing of bells. Their 'palace' grounds were patrolled by their liveried retainers. The nobles disported themselves in Mughal costumes and held princely darbars

on ceremonial occasions in accord with regulations established by their forbears. Sitting on gaddis amidst their courtiers they made public speeches, announced general policies, received nazars, gave benedictions, accepted darkhasts, and allotted reliefs. In short they went through all the motions of royal personages despite the lack of any legal foundation for such pretentions.

An inevitable by-product of their conspicuous consumption was a specific style of upbringing for their children. Unlike the bhadralok the nobles did not attach much importance to formal education since it was considered a means of livelihood for people of 'inferior' birth. Although some of their children were sent to schools and colleges, the general practice was to educate the children at home on subjects considered useful for zamindari management. Moreover, from a very young age the children were instructed in carrying themselves in a 'dignified' fashion and a cultivated etiquette considered appropriate for noblemen. This conscious inculcation of a superior attitude, plus the fact that they spent their formative ages behind high walls surrounding the 'palace' compounds, instilled in children of noble families a profound self-importance which in turn led to exclusiveness. They grew up in an atmosphere apart from children of 'lesser' families, believing that they were above the rest of the community, and continued to remain aloof even as men. On maturing they either married within their own group or, if circumstances

necessitated taking brides from outside, methodically severed relationships with the bridal families.

These children, on succeeding their parents, continued to regard themselves and their fellow nobles with the highest esteem. They strove to attain further honours with more flamboyant titles. To emphasise their exclusiveness they corresponded with one another on specially prepared paper, received one another in state, and maintained exclusive formalities in their relationships with each other. In a similar manner they treated and received important British notables.

This traditional nobility gained further importance in the second half of the nineteenth century. The effects of the Sepoy Mutiny led to the transfer of power from the Company to the Crown, which thereby became an Indian Sovereign. One of the side effects of this alteration was to bring the indigenous 'nobility' to public attention. Official efforts were exerted to systemise the Sovereign's noblemen. All of this publicity further enhanced their sense of self-importance. By the end of the century they had been categorised and ranked in a hierarchical pattern with privileges and prerogatives in keeping with their seniority. The Government also allotted them special seats on ceremonial occasions, reserved certain forms of adornment for their exclusive use, fixed the cost of medical expenses chargeable by Government medical officers, granted to the hereditary noblemen the rights to make formal visits to and receive a return visit from the head of the province, exempted

them from attendance in civil courts and from the compliance with the arms act. Such privileges further separated them from the rest of the community. They began to clamour for special privileges such as distinctive buildings in colleges for their use and for separate schools for their children. Soon, with the aid of the Title Committee, this group totally closed their ranks, making it practically impossible for any new aspirant to enter their closed corporation.

Thus, although a nobility with substantive power did not exist in twentieth century Bengal, the group under review manifested all the basic qualities of a recognisable status group. They were exclusive and remote in the extreme, they demanded a specific way of life from their fellow members, and they had a sense of belonging to a group superior to and more 'dignified' than the rest of the society.

Their position as proprietors of large agricultural estates, along with their love for high sounding titles activated by their desire to be identified as the scions of the old nobility, created a situation by which they emerged as a profitable element to the inhabitants of the province. The groups' standing was of such importance that its members could claim with confidence that they were the 'natural leaders' of the indigenous society. The Permanent Settlement gave these families perpetual proprietary rights in law which they had until then only held in fact. Thus instead of depriving them of their

illegal gains acquired during the decline of the Mughal rule, the new Administration officialised their status by equating jagir-i-tankwans with jagir-i-watans. The act of 1793 perpetuated their lineage and this removed the danger of being replaced because of any popular dissatisfaction against any individual concerned. Personal competency as the defacto government in the locality was no longer called for. So long as they were able to keep the revenue collecting machinery oiled and working allowing them to render proper accounts to the Government, they were sure of being left unmolested in their territories. This made it possible for the families concerned to safely withdraw into their seclusion even more than the nobles of earlier eras. Thus, over the generations the individual on the gaddi gradually acquired a depersonalised quality. Under the circumstances it became practically impossible for the local people to assess the failings of any particular occupant of the gaddi. The achievements and roles that he received credit for were not necessarily his own but that of the family institution which he symbolised. Thus despite any shortcomings he could still bask in the glories of some competent ancestor. This made it unnecessary for a capable personality to be on the gaddi at all times. All that he required to do was maintain what he had inherited and pass it on to his successor. In time another competent successor would inherit who would add to the glory of the family. This process could keep the family at the apex for generations. Because of this cumulative process



a situation developed whence the effects of such acts were felt in some form or the other by a very large section of the population. This capacity to influence the people thus linked to them made it possible for them to claim that they were the 'natural leaders' or leaders by virtue of the advantages of birth.

By virtue of the size and character of their estates this status group was in a dominant position in their own economic class. The Administration quite obviously looked at them for support and advice on issues affecting the landholders. This made it possible for the nobles to set the pace for the rest of their class. Their estates were regarded as the models by the lesser zamindars, their systems of zamindari management were studied and imitated, they themselves were used as channels of communication to convey local grievances and needs to the Administration. At times they were even relied on to act as trustees and managers for smaller estates, and often funds expended by them for the improvement of their own estates benefitted the surrounding zamindaris also. In short they formed the nucleus of the zamindari system that was in existence in Bengal.

The usefulness of the noble households was not limited to these handful of zamindars only. To ensure regular payment of revenue to the Government the Burdwan Estate, followed by several others, had introduced a system of dividing and sub-dividing the cultivable areas and farming them out to numerous tenants and sub-tenants.

Thus came into being a school of sub-contractors graded according to a hierarchical pattern. It was the lowest level of this group of sub-contractors which came into actual contact with the local peasantry, making each successive level more and more remote and exclusive. This pattern increased the possibilities for the individual noblemen to withdraw into seclusion permitting the populace to be aware of only a semi-ethereal facade. Thus the efforts and the activities of the noblemen enumerated beyond the 'palace' walls became more legendary than real, giving these depersonalised figures a mythological glamour. The girth of this pyramidal tenantry, who unconsciously aided to the growth of the nobles' exclusiveness, gradually increased until it engulfed practically the entire bhadralok population of rural Bengal. A great portion of the landlords' incomes were shared out amongst this large section of the mufassil population. Although on the average 80% of the income derived from land was the proprietor's share, on record it is noted that even the Maharaja of Burdwan, the owner of the largest zamindari, actually received only an average of 16% from his estate. Thus it is safe to presume that a big proportion of the rural bhadralok population was economically inter-linked with the noble households. The large zamindars depended on them for their collection while they in turn derived substantial supplementary income for their joint family pools. This inter-dependence made it possible for the tenants to air their grievances with ease since their relationship

with the local zamindar was an intimate one, and it also forced the zamindar to listen to their concerted appeal with sympathy since his own well being depended on the latter's cooperation. But doubtless the more significant benefit was the actual financial gain. The tenantry income acted as a supplement to the income of the bhadralok who were primarily professional men. This insignificant sum gained in importance during emergencies since it functioned as a financial cushion. In a country where there was no state provision for social welfare and where social taboos prevented such people from tiding over difficult times by accepting menial work or by their women seeking employment, the only income that existed under such circumstances were their share in the tenancy. An economic link so fundamental in character gave the depersonalised figures on the gaddis a patriarchal authority over the local population despite the lack of legal sanction.

The traditional authority of these patriarchs spread further than the people linked to them by the land only. This was so because of the impossibility of claiming noble status without continuing to perform certain traditional roles established by their forbears. One such sphere of activity was in the religious life of the province. They were expected by the people, the Government, and their fellow members to maintain temples and mosques with considerable properties attached which provided large sums as revenue. This function placed them in the position of the local shebayats and mutwallis. In such religious establishments not only were daily services

performed but thousands of devotees were also expected to be regularly fed. Moreover, these sanctuaries acted as refuges for the poor, the sick, the old, the widows and other unfortunate people. It was possible for such people to retire to these establishments and thus avoid becoming dependent on others' charity, or facing the danger of having their reputations tarnished as social parasites, or as people living off Government handouts.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary the move was considered an act of piety and such people were regarded and treated with considerable respect.

Closely linked with the religious life of the province was caste. Here also the nobles, following the example of their predecessors, functioned as the caste dalpatis and financed their respective central funds for educating the less fortunate, providing up-to-date information to interested parties, giving financial assistance to the needy, supplying free or cheap kitchens and dormitories for people away from home, and generally strengthening the economic base of their respective caste. It must be kept in mind that high caste did not necessarily signify affluence. The poorest man in Bengal could quite easily belong to the highest caste. Thus the system, greatly sustained by the noble houses, provided a process by which poorer members of the society could receive help from the better off without any loss of face. This process of distribution of wealth was even more effective as the unique position of noblemen made it possible for them to act as dalpatis of more than one caste, thus providing means of communication in the apparently rigid

1. In a country where only a small percentage paid any tax such benefits would undoubtedly be considered handouts rather than rights.

social structure.

This traditional role of annadatas along with the desire to gain further honours, also forced the nobles to maintain schools and colleges, dispensaries and hospitals, where they had to provide subsidised education or scholarships and free or inexpensive medical facilities. They also had to concentrate their funds on the civic development of the locality by providing waterworks, electricity, canals, drainage, and river dams despite the fact that these activities were legally in the Government's sphere. They were also expected to maintain model farms and patronise agro-industrial exhibitions to promote better production in their localities. They had to further maintain machineries which could be mobilised during emergencies for such acts as importation of cheap food during famines, rescue work during floods, and financial assistance from their suspense accounts<sup>1</sup> for the suffering during periods of stress. They were also expected to encourage cultural development of the people by patronising such intellectual bodies as literary societies and music circles. Some of them participated in the commercial life of the province as well.

All these functions necessarily had to be performed by them even if the individuals concerned may have desired otherwise. The neglect of these roles would have led to the inevitable exposure of this nobility without a legal or political base. Their forbears had established that

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1. Appendix II

a nobleman was to be the local karta or malik and act as the inhabitants' annadata. To change their character at this late date, when they had been deprived of their political power, would have been suicidal. So they refrained from allowing this functional role to wilt and perish. It was not a difficult task since the system which had been built over generations had become self-generating requiring no undue effort to run from the individuals concerned. This unbroken chain of functions paid them good dividends. Despite the unworthy character of many nobles, a great many of local people continued to respect and remain attached to these households which exercised patriarchal authority. This attachment of the people to the gaddis is well illustrated in the autobiography of the Maharaja of Susang. The Maharaja returned to his estate for a visit in 1956, a decade after the creation of East Pakistan and found near the 'palace' gate, the parent of a sick child, waiting there in confident expectation that the mere sight of the gaddi would inspire a miraculous cure. Another couple came to make offerings as thanksgiving for the birth of a male child. Not only had the Maharaja been away for many years, and was expected never to return, but when the people concerned actually saw him they did not even recognise him.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the individuals on the gaddi were of secondary importance. The respect and attachment were for the gaddi itself.

The existence of these socio-economic links which could be utilised as channels of communication made it possible for the nobles to find a new role in the political

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1. B.C.Sinha: Changing Times, pp. v-viii

life of the province. The nineteenth century experienced the emergence and growth of a process of consultative politics in India. In time, the Administration rarely legislated on any issue, introduced any reforms, or pursued any policy without first assessing the public reaction to the proposed schemes. The development of this form of political mechanism gave the Bengalis who were conversant with English ideals and methods, and who were at the same time capable of guiding public opinion, an opportunity to become intermediaries in public affairs. Under the circumstances the nobles and their fellow zamindars were at an advantage. Though they had been shorn of most political powers they still exercised considerable traditional influence in most of the province. Moreover they had it in their control the various lines of communication discussed by which the Government's policy could be conveyed and interpreted to the populace. Thus their hereditary position already provided the channels through which they could function as intermediaries for the rulers.

All they lacked to become truly effective in the role of intermediaries were platforms from which Indian needs could be voiced for the Government's attention. This need led to the creation of numerous political associations representing various interest groups. The first one of some importance was the British Indian Association. Apart from the senior zamindars the Association's membership comprised eminent businessmen, renowned lawyers, reputed doctors, and other such people involved

in professions and services. Despite its multi-class constitution, the motive force of the body lay in the hands of the nobles and other senior zamindars. For the first half of the nineteenth century this political organisation dominated the Indian political scene.

In the second half of the century the zamindars' monopolistic political leadership of this indigenous society was challenged by the growing Calcutta intelligentsia whose interest lay in professions and services rather than landholdings. The Indian Association, a subsidiary body of the Indian National Congress, became their spokesman and superseded the British Indian Association in importance in the urban areas. With its growth in importance it became increasingly obvious to the leaders of the older body that the attitude of the members of the two associations on various basic points were at variance with one another. While the former advocated the role of intermediaries by such associations, the latter took on the more vigorous stance of opposition to the Government. Moreover, their opposition took the direction of nationalism in contrast to the older group who struggled for equal status of Bengal in particular, and India in general, within a federated empire. But the most fundamental difference in the nobles' opinion, lay in the newer group's approach to western ideas and institutions. Being bound by traditions the older leaders preached that western views should be studied, examined and then carefully adapted to the indigenous institutions



already in existence. Viewing the activities of the new group, the traditional leaders felt convinced that the intelligentsia, in their anxiety to show that educated Indians were as advanced in all respects as the British were falling into the dangerous habit of rejecting all indigenous institutions in favour of western ones. The nobles were convinced that the new leadership was nudging India into a path leading towards 'denationalisation'. In other words they were preaching 'racial suicide'. Due to this divergence of attitude, and the nobles' suspicion of the efforts of the intelligentsia, the turn of the century found two rival groups of leadership in Bengal. Thus the nobles took a step further in their evolving political functions. From baronial powers they had moved to the role of intermediaries; now they had become intermediaries functioning in part as a counter-poise to the nationalist leaders.

This rivalry with the fast rising intelligentsia instilled fear in the minds of many noblemen and other senior zamindars. They feared that the controversy would inevitably lead to an attack by many of the newer leaders on their rights as landlords. In their opinion this was an inevitable result of the younger group's tendency to seek inspiration from the west. Since most of them appeared to be supporters of the English liberals, the nobles feared that the Liberal Party's doctrine of

more equitable distribution of land<sup>1</sup> would inevitably creep into the demands of many local nationalists, thus endangering the very foundation on which the nobility stood. As an antidote to such a possibility some senior noblemen initiated the formation of the Bengal Landholders Association in 1911. The Association, which was to consist exclusively of landlords, aimed to advocate the landholders' cause to the Government, to improve the image of the landholders in the eyes of the public, and to create closer understanding between the landholders and other important sections of the community.

Along with the general antagonism the Muslim nobles further feared that the Hindu dominated urban intelligentsia's vigorous efforts would deprive their fellow religionists the opportunity to secure special treatment to allow the community to catch up with the Hindus. In their view this would undoubtedly result in most of the better employments being retained by the more advanced Hindus in contrast to the lesser educated Muslims. This misgiving led to the formation of the Bengal Presidency Moslem League and the Central National Muhammedan Association of Calcutta. Utilising these platforms, the Muslim nobles and their associates determined to safe-guard

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1. They were aware of the Liberal Party's endeavours to curtail the rights of the landlords in England. In 1909 the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer in a strongly worded speech had questioned, "... who ordained that a few should have the land of the Britain as a perquisite, who made 10,000 people owners of the soil, and the rest of us trespassers in the land of our birth....." - R. Jenkins:

Mr. Balfour's Poodle, p.94

the interests of the Muslims against the overbearing domination of the Congress cum Indian Association, who apparently cared little for Muslim advancement.

Apart from being the nerve centre of the urban intelligentsia the city and its hinterland were important commercially. The Indian commercial community that resided within had grown into an important element in the economic life of the province. Following the example of the British commercial community, the Indian merchants, led by the Law family, established a chamber of commerce. The Bengal National Chamber of Commerce thus initiated emerged in due course as the spokesman of Indian commercial interests in eastern India.

These six associations - British Indian Association, Bengal Landholders Association, Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, Bengal Presidency Moslem League, Central National Muhammedan Association, and Indian Association - were the major political associations which gained prominence and emerged as the main intermediaries in public affairs in the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus, on close examination we find that, apart from the Indian Association, the nobles dominated the proceedings of all the important political bodies of the province. Moreover, all six major associations were considered of equal importance by the Government and their opinions carried equal weight. Keeping this in mind, one must conclude that while the nationalists basically represented a single interest group, the nobles in their corporate capacity represented a far wider spectrum of interests in the province. In short they had emerged as the inter-organisational political leaders

of Bengal. This development, added to the fact that they had numerous channels by which the public could be mobilised, placed them as intermediaries in a far superior position to the nationalist leaders of the time. Their effectiveness as such was ascertained by their capacity to move the Administration without having to resort to agitational demonstrations and to mobilise public opinion without having to succumb to making either conciliatory or inflammatory speeches.

A close examination leaves little doubt that the nobles functioned very effectively as conservative intermediaries. The major issues that affected Bengal during the decade under review were the revocation of the partition, the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, the conversion of Bengal from a Lieutenant Governor's to a full Governor's province, the First World War and its aftermath. The revocation of the partition caused a great deal of resentment in the hearts of many Bengali Muslims. The move was interpreted by them as the Government's defeat in the hands of the Hindu agitators who cared little for the well being of the Muslims. Their despondency was further aggravated by the attitude of the British regarding Persian affairs and the Turko-Italian conflict. The Pan-Islamists, taking advantage of the existing atmosphere, excited the Muslim people on the slightest excuse such as the inadvertant demolition of a section of a mosque. The situation became explosive with Turkey's declaration of war with Great Britain. The delicate handling of issues affecting the Muslim community and the guidance of Muslim public opinion

became the primary task of Carmichael on taking office as Governor. Matters were not made any easier for him by repetitive communal riots during the Bakr Id festivals and by the need to establish an efficient machinery to organise pilgrim traffic during the forthcoming Akbari Haj. The Governor relied heavily, and with excellent results, on the judgement and support of the Nawab of Dacca, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury, Nawab Shamsul Huda, and the Nawab of Murshidabad. The Nawab of Murshidabad, though less articulate in political matters than the other nawabs, had the advantage of representing that household which linked the Bengali Muslims to their historic past in the province. This placed him in a unique position for which they felt a profound respect. Moreover, he was the officially recognised Amir-ul-Omra. The combination of these factors caused his requests and instructions to be considered with some respect. His effectiveness became unmistakeable when a manifesto issued by him in 1912 brought an apparently uncontrollable communal riot to an end. Apart from these nawabs, others who were similarly prominent were Nawab Abdul Jabbar, Nawab Sujatali Beg, Nawab Serajul Islam and the Nawab of Bogra.

The revocation of the partition coincided with the transfer of the capital to Delhi. Both moves were announced during the Delhi Darbar. The transfer caused great fears amongst the commercial community that the commercial importance of Bengal would be diminished. This created a need to prevent the fear from degenerating into discontent by improving the standard of trade and

commerce, opening up better waterway traffic, improving port facilities, and so on. The understanding and appreciation of the Government's policies in connection with these matters by the Indian merchants was of prime importance. To achieve this end, the administration relied heavily on the National Chamber of Commerce and the British Indian Association. The person who acted as the representative of Indian interests in most of the various committees called for such purposes was Raja Reshee Case Law: Chairman of Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, Secretary of the British Indian Association, a premier landlord, an eminent dalpati, a renowned educationalist, and a senior merchant.

The transfer of the viceregal seat to Delhi and the up grading of Bengal to a Governor's province involved many administrative changes. Some, such as the conversion of the executive head from Lieutenant Governor to a full Governor, could be carried out with equanimity without Indian advice and support; while others, like the re-modelling of the Board of Revenue, had to be done with greater caution. In this and other such matters, the British Indian Association and the landholders associations were relied upon to help the Administration.

More than any of the above issues it was the War which caused the greatest anxiety, creating a need for extreme care and caution. Law and order in the city and the province had to be maintained. Unfortunately, at that very critical time, the police force had lost a good deal of prestige in the eyes of the public.

Hardinge aspired to remedy the situation by creating an understanding between apparently irreconcilable forces. To effect this he called upon the Maharaja of Burdwan and his associates for help. The Maharaja appealed to the British Indian Association and other such societies to guide public opinion towards a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties faced by the police in Bengal. At the same time he advised the Government to carry out effective police reforms. Their efforts in this matter proved successful.

With the outbreak of hostilities there also arose a great need to mobilise public opinion in support of the allies' cause. It was in this sphere that the nobles showed their real worth as intermediaries. Acting in concert, they encouraged the growth of public loyalty, raised funds and supplies for the war, encouraged enlisting in the armed forces, helped create the Bengal Double Company, opened their homes to wounded and convalescing soldiers, exerted their influence to keep the prices of food and other essential goods under control, and offered their entire resources for the use of the Imperial Government.

The end of the War marked the beginning of a new phase in Indian History. The Nationalists were clamouring for a more dynamic gesture on the part of the British for the men and supplies contributed by the princes and people of India during the War. Bengal joined the rest of India in this demand. To a large extent the efforts

of the nobles made it possible for the province to justify such a claim. This led to the inclusion of nobles and other eminent personalities of Bengal in the list of those who were being asked their opinion on the type of reform the country should be granted. Apparently very little consideration was paid by the Authorities in England to the views and recommendations expressed by the nobles.

With the rejection of their suggestions it became obvious to the nobles for the first time that there were distinct limits to their effectiveness as natural leaders of the people or intermediaries in public affairs. Doubtless they had proved very effective as such. As a bridge between the rulers and the ruled and in their capacity in representing Indian interests, they played a larger role than the nationalists of the time. But their aspirations were founded on apparently false premises. They aimed at a federated empire with every unit having equal status without losing its individuality. They were misled by the Administration's apparent sincerity in its assurance that the task of the British in India was to function as trustees until she attained political maturity and could stand equally with the advanced units of the Empire. The nobles were beguiled by such assurances that had been repeatedly made by many administrators. Even as early as 1833 Macaulay had worded this apparent aim by stating that when such a time arrived it would be the proudest day in English history. But the nobles failed



to keep in mind that the public utterances of the desires of individual politicians - especially those ultimately responsible to alien interests - did not necessarily mean that they reflected the opinions of the policy makers. On examining the private correspondence of some senior officials<sup>1</sup> regarding the 1912 Round Table Conference we find that although they agreed that it was their duty to provide India with the best type of government, many of them denied that their objective was to allow India one day to speak on an equal level with Britain. It must always be kept in mind that Indian interests were subordinate to imperial interests they maintained. The correspondents emphasised that the representative from India must be the one who would represent the Government of India rather than the people of India.<sup>2</sup> Thus it could be argued that the nobles had lacked the ability to anticipate reality and in the process provided a leadership which misled the people into a path of pitfalls: indeed the very thing they accused the nationalists of doing.

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1. Memos of W.H. Buchan, H.T.Cullis, V.Chirol, E. Molony, W.S. Marris, Kerr, Round Table Conference: Meston, Vol.10, loose pages.
  2. It is difficult to assess the sincerity behind such arguments. Keeping in mind that the officials in India were nervous about the rising importance of the belligerent nationalists one may wonder whether they were using such arguments to convince the Liberal Government in London that they should not nominate a non-official to the Conference. After all when one spoke of the people of India it usually meant the vocal intelligentsia. One is left with the query whether they would have taken the same stand if they were certain that such a person would not be chosen.

There is considerable evidence to indicate that in the early years of the decade the nobles believed that the liberals in England - who had gained the ascendancy in parliamentary politics - were the inadvertent enemies of India since they unconsciously diverted Indian aspirations into harmful channels. But they could not overlook the fact that the destiny of India and their own position in the Indian political fabric was in the hands of the liberals. Thus the nobles desired the continuation of conservative principles and yet realised the necessity of adjusting to liberal doctrines. With that in mind they proceeded to project a liberal image of themselves without actually sacrificing their conservative aspirations. Even when the proposal to establish advisory councils - which would have given the large landholders a legislative position equivalent to those of the Peers in London - was rejected, their disappointment was not voiced publicly. Eminent noblemen such as the Nawab of Dacca<sup>1</sup> and the Maharaja of Burdwan<sup>2</sup> noted their regrets in private letters to Curzon but never ventured to mobilise a concerted effort against the decision. On the contrary they quietly agreed to work along with the intelligentsia in the Legislative and Executive Councils. All that they aimed to do was to act with moderation as a counterpoise to excessive nationalist tendencies.

During the 1909 elections, the nobles came very close to becoming an effective counterpoise to the

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1. Dacca to Curzon 24 Feb. 1909, Letters:Curzon, Vol.427, p.3.
  2. Burdwan to Curzon 6 Jan. 1909, Ibid, Vol.426, p.82 .

nationalists. The nationalists had declared that they would boycott the elections with the hope that the Legislative and Executive Councils would be devoid of any Indian representatives by their move. This would effectively humiliate the Administration. The nobles along with their fellow zamindars deprived the nationalist move of its full impact by disregarding the boycott call. Moreover Raja Kishori Lal Goswami accepted office as the Indian Executive Councillor without any pre-conditions.

Although the nobles had gained an advantage in the Council by their move, they were unable to retain it for long. Unlike the nationalist leaders their capacity as parliamentary debaters was very limited. Throughout the session their speeches and amendment motions were of poor quality. Despite this limitation, they might have matured as an effective force if they had closed their ranks and concerted their voting strength into a power block. But, in contrast to their willingness to close ranks where the question of their status as a group was concerned,<sup>1</sup> in their parliamentary activities they showed symptoms of disintegration. Doubtless it was the effect of the degradation of the Peers in England by Asquith.<sup>2</sup> This move on the part of the British liberals created a sense of panic in their ranks. They wondered

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1. The Title Committee.
  2. Since the Liberal victory in 1906 the struggle with the Conservative-orientated Upper House became very pronounced. There was resentment that a hereditary body should have the veto over the elected representatives of the people. The question came to a head when the Lords rejected the Liberal Budget in 1909. The Liberal Party made sure that such a possibility would never arise again by replacing the power of veto by the mere power of delay.

what would happen to them when the Lords in the ruling country itself could be coerced into submission and degraded below the commons. They realised that the landholders were on trial and got on the defensive. They began to make desperate efforts to be bracketted with the liberal leaders with moderate views. Their reaction became apparent during the sitting of the Revision of Election Rules Committee. The nobles in the Committee not only conceded to the intelligentsia supremacy in the city, but they also opened their reserved constituencies to non-nobles. This move was in contradiction to their basic principle which was to retain patriarchal authority by remaining remote and cultivating exclusiveness.

Despite their concessions in the Election Rules Committee, they managed to capture enough seats in the 1912 Legislative Council to be in a position from which they could emerge as the decisive factor in the House. Their combined votes could tilt the divisions in favour or against any motion. This combination in the Chamber was essential for them since they did not stand a chance against the nationalist leaders as debaters. Most of them were untrained in such arts and all of them found it psychologically difficult to vie words with people they considered below their own 'dignified' status. They were so handicapped by this fact that even relatively good orators such as Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury and the Maharaja of Burdwan could seldom be seen taking the floor in the Council. Such being the case the only way they could have made their presence effectively felt was by

a combination of voting strength. Instead of working towards this end which could have nullified their shortcomings as legislative speakers, they exerted themselves to establish the principle of individuality and vigorously preached against the formation of party platforms. This impractical aim proved disastrous for them since they were outshone at every count in the Council Chamber. At last they had been forced out of their exclusive surroundings and placed on an equality with 'ordinary men'. In the circumstances they began to lose their mythological glamour in the eyes of the public and the electorate became aware of their glaring shortcomings. The effect of this was felt in the 1916 elections. Many of the senior nobles were defeated and a younger group which showed potential vitality and advocated a different approach to issues were returned instead. This ended once and for all the possibility of the group combining into an effective power block in the legislative body of Bengal.

Through their lack of insight into parliamentary affairs they failed to become an effective counterpoise to the nationalist "radicals" in the House. But their efforts to become so were not restricted to the Council. The nationalist movement, inspired by the leaders of the intelligentsia in the Indian National Congress, was gathering increasing momentum and showed symptoms of deteriorating into full-scale violence and terrorism. The nobles in concert took to the field to counteract this dangerous and unpleasant possibility. At its inception the nobles of Bengal hailed the formation of the Congress and participated in its activities with

unrestrained enthusiasm. But in time when it became obvious to them that various factions in the party were inspiring ultra-Hindu tendencies and violence, the nobles withdrew their support. On the contrary they exerted themselves to contain its growing influence. They mobilised public opinion against the terrorists via the political associations in their control, the press and platforms they could influence, the schools and colleges they patronised, the caste bodies that they supervised, and every aspect of socio-economic activities that was in their sphere of influence. Their efforts were doubtless effective since their appeal could be backed with positive acts. A great deal of the police activities in the mufassil were in their charge. Moreover they could coerce disruptive elements by their own lathials. The Nawab of Dacca claimed that he could mobilise more than 10,000 men single handed. They could also counteract the growth of discontent caused by rising prices by providing essentials from their storehouses and financial help from their suspense accounts. Their subsidised educational institutions and medical facilities could further relieve a certain amount of economic pressure. Furthermore, their encouragement of swadeshi enterprises, in contrast to the swadeshi slogans of some nationalists, created employment opportunities. Finally, their free dormitories and kitchens provided much-needed shelter for the young during the transition period between student life and the securing of suitable employment.

Simultaneously, the nawabs and their associates took up the task of weaning the Muslims from the possibility of succumbing to the influence of the Congress. They were conscious of the fact that when the nationalist leaders of Calcutta toured the mufassil they left an emotionally charged atmosphere of discontent in their wake. As a counter measure, the Moslem League was initiated in the Nawab of Dacca's residence. Even when the League appeared to have fallen under the domination of the Congress after the death of the Nawab of Dacca, his associates continued to exert themselves under the lead of Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury and succeeded in retaining the separate identity of the Muslim community in Bengal.

Despite all their immediate effectiveness, the analysis of their efforts, functions and role leaves one with the same doubt. One cannot help but question whether they were wise in doing what they did. One is left with the disturbing query whether they had not lacked the necessary foresight which makes a leadership worthy of credit. Their inability to see further into the realities of alien colonisation was a glaring failure. Thus, although the institution may have provided socio-economic benefits and their personal efforts may have prevented the growth of violence leading to a bloody end of the Empire, because of their basic short-coming one is left with the nagging feeling that they failed in their responsibility to the people over whom they held traditional authority.

Summing up, we find that the nobility had changed in character. The noblemen's behavioural pattern, privileges and prerogatives were such as to create the impression that they had not changed. Despite this, there is little doubt that the noblemen of Bengal formed a status group. Their faces, though they differed in conformation, echoed each other in expression. Thus over the years the nobles had changed from a political class to a status group.

Their overemphasis upon their traditional functions encouraged them to continue in the role of annadata established by their predecessors as appropriate to the malik or karta. This function of the nobles provided numerous social benefits which proved very useful in a society that did not live in a welfare state. Although these socio-economic roles were based on traditional functions, they too had undergone considerable change. The khajna they received was no longer entirely their own but had to be shared with nearly the entire rural bhadralok community of Bengal. They had become social safety valves. However, in the social services they maintained, although the pattern remained similar to their forebears they were flexible enough to adapt them to modern needs like electrification, model farms, cooperative societies, and agro-industrial exhibitions.

These socio-economic links that emerged from the continuance of such traditional roles provided the nobles with channels of communication by which they could be in touch with the general public. Using these channels, the nobles were able to function effectively in their new



political role of intermediaries in public affairs and also contain the spread of terrorism and ultra-Hinduism to a large extent. In short their political function had undergone a complete change from the role of the governing class to that of intermediaries and counter-poise to extreme nationalism. As a side effect of it the Muslim nawabs inspired and gave shape to the separate Muslim identity in the province. This the nawabs managed to preserve despite the small but powerful Muslim intelligentsia's inclination to join hands with the Hindu dominated Congress movement. But for the efforts of the nawabs East Pakistan or Bangladesh may have never come into existence.

Although the status group appeared to be a dynamic indigenous institution, in reality it contained some inherent qualities which led to its ultimate failure. The most glaring defect was the fact that it was not a real nobility and thus lacked any concrete foundation in law. No matter how hard they tried to suggest otherwise, the fact remained that in the eyes of the law they were nothing more than mere revenue agents of the Government. This inherent weakness prevented the group from becoming as powerful as the members may have wished. They came very close to acquiring a political status with the proposal for advisory councils in the provinces and in the centre with the large landholders as the nuclei. They tried once more with the forthcoming Montagu-Chelmsford reforms by suggesting to the Authorities that some of them should be nominated to the House of Lords in London. But both attempts proved futile.

Moreover, since the status group was built on hereditary principles, it was unable to overcome this weakness by providing an unbroken chain of meritorious men capable of leadership in their localities: a factor so essential for them since they were engaged in a struggle for political leadership with the rising intelligentsia. Authority being passed from father to son with no respect for competency prevented a healthy circulation of elites. The consequences justified Pareto's argument that aristocracies do not decline only in numbers but decay also in quality, in the sense that they lose their vigour and that there is a decline in the proportions of the 'residues'<sup>1</sup> which enabled them to win their power and hold it.<sup>2</sup> This weakness caused by the lack of circulation barring any possibility of quick replacement came to pronounced focus during the decade under review. Effective noblemen such as the Nawab of Dacca, the Raja of Sovabazar, the Maharaja of Nashipur, the Nawab of Bogra, and Nawab Abdul Jubbar died and left

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1. Pareto's concept of residue: He distinguishes between the rational and non-rational actions of individuals in social life. Rational actions are those directed to attainable ends and employing means which are appropriate to the attainment of the ends. Irrational actions are those directed to any ends, or directed to unattainable ends, or using means which cannot attain the end. The forces or 'residues' behind rational action are the cunning, force, sociability, activity and integrity of individuals. When the proportion of these 'residues' decline the quality of the aristocracy degenerates. - V.PARETO: Sociological Writings, pp. 38-41, 54-55.

2. Ibid, p.50

a vacuum which could not easily be filled by their successors. Under such conditions the successors were more often than not too young and inexperienced. With such a fundamental shortcoming the group was unable to maintain its superiority when the emphasis of political activities shifted from depersonalised influence to the legally constituted Councils requiring individual merit and positive ability. They proved incapable of contesting in this field. To salvage their deteriorating situation they desperately tried to merge with the moderate nationalists. It is significant that the Maharaja of Burdwan ignored family traditions and, unlike his eldest son who was educated at home, sent his younger son to Harrow for formal education. It was also noticeable that the Maharaja of Susang while building a new 'palace' at his estate headquarter left out the darbar hall from its construction plan.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, eminent noblemen such as the Maharaja of Burdwan, the Raja of Santosh, and the Maharaja of Dighapatia began to attend conferences convened by moderate Congressmen.<sup>2</sup> In their desperate effort to project a liberal facade they activated a process which gradually eroded the very plinth on which their basic strength was built: a separate identity and depersonalised influence. With the emergence of leaders of national standing like Gandhi and Jinnah the nobles receded to the background forever.

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1. N.C.Sinha: Changing Times, pp. 4,6

2. India Review, no.xxi 1920, p.24

APPENDIX IRAJAS AND NAWABS. (1911-1919)NATIVE PRINCES. (HEREDITARY)

Maharaja Bahadur Raj Rajendra Narayan of Cooch Behar.

Maharaja Bahadur Jitendra Narayan of Cooch Behar.

Maharaja Barindro Kishore Deb Barman of Tripura.

NOBLEMEN. (HEREDITARY)

Nawab Bahadur Wasaf Ali Mirza of Murshidabad.

Nawab Bahadur Salimulla Khan of Dacca.

Nawab Bahadur Habibullah Khan of Dacca.

Maharajadhiraj Bahadur Bijay Chand Mahtab of Burdwan.

Maharaja Kumud Chandra Singh of Susang.

Maharaja Ranajit Sinha of Nashipur.

Raja Bahadur Bhupendra Narayan Sinha of Nashipur.

Maharaja Bahadur Prodyot Coomar Tagore.

TRIBAL CHIEFS. (HEREDITARY)

Chakma Raja Bhuban Mohan Rai.

Mong Raja Niphiru Sain.

NOBLEMEN- TERRITORIAL. (OBSTRUCTED HERITAGE)

Nawab Abdus Sobhan Chaudhuri of Bogra.

Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhury of Dhanbaria.

Maharaja Bahadur Mahendra Chandra Nandi of Kassimbazar.

Maharaja Bahadur Girija Nath Roy of Dinajpur.

Maharaja Bahadur Kshaunis Chandra Ray of Nadia.

Maharaja Bahadur Pramada Nath Rai of Dighapatia.

Maharaja Ram Ranjan Chakravarti of Hetampur.

Maharaja Jagadindra Nath Roy of Nator.

Raja Bahadur Lashi Kanta Acharjya Chaudhuri of Muktagacha.

Raja Bahadur Jagat Kishore Roy of Mymensingh.  
 Raja Bahadur Benaya Krishna Deb of Sovabazar.  
 Raja Bahadur Kristendra Rai of Bolihar.  
 Raja Bijay Singh Dudhoria of Azamgunj.  
 Raja Janaki Ballabh Sen of Dimli,  
 Raja Satyaniranjan Chakravarti of Hetampur.  
 Raja Gopal Lal Ray of Tajhat.  
 Raja Berindra Chandra Singh of Paikpara.  
 Raja Rao Jogendra Narayan Ray of Lalgola.  
 Raja Baikuntha Nath De of Balasore.  
 Raja Sharat Chandra Rai Chaudhuri of Chanchal.  
 Raja Sati Prosad Gogra of Mahisadal.  
 Raja Shasi Shekhareshwar Rai of Tahirpur.  
 Raja Manmatha Roy Chaudhury of Santosh.  
 Raja Moniloll Singh Roy of Chakdighi.  
 Raja Srinath Rai of Bhagyakul.  
 Raja Narendra Lal Khan of Narajole.  
 Raja Pramada Bhusan Deb Rai of Naldunga.  
 Raja Mahendra Ranjan Roy Chaudhuri of Kakina.

NOBLEMEN- PERSONAL. (OBSTRUCTED HERITAGE)

Nawab Syed Mohammad Khan.  
 Nawab Khwaja Mohammad Yusuf Hosain.  
 Nawab Syed Shamsul Huda.  
 Nawab Serajul Islam.  
 Nawab Abdul Jabbar.  
 Nawab Mohammad Yusuf.  
 Nawab Badruddin Haidar Khan.  
 Nawab A.F.M. Abdur Rahman.  
 Nawab Wala Qadr Mirza.  
 Nawab Mohamed Ali Nawab Chaudhury.  
 Nawab Syed Jahandar Mirza.  
 Nawab Sujat Ali Beg.

Nawab Syed Moazzin Hossain.

Raja Jogendra Kishore Roy.

Raja Bhuban Mohan Roy.

Raja Kishori Lal Goswami.

Raja Govind Lal Rai.

Raja Jyot Kumar Mekerjee.

Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee.

Raja Kristo Das Law.

Raja Reshee Case Law.

Raja Saurindra Mohan Tagore.

Raja Shib Chandra Banerji.

Raja Gopendra Krishna Deb.

Raja Dinendra Narayan Roy.

Raja Bahadur Pramatha Bhusan Deb. .

Raja Bahadur Ban Bihari Kapur.

Raja Upendranarayan Mitra Roy.

Raja Shew Bux Bogla.

Raja Sreenath Roy.

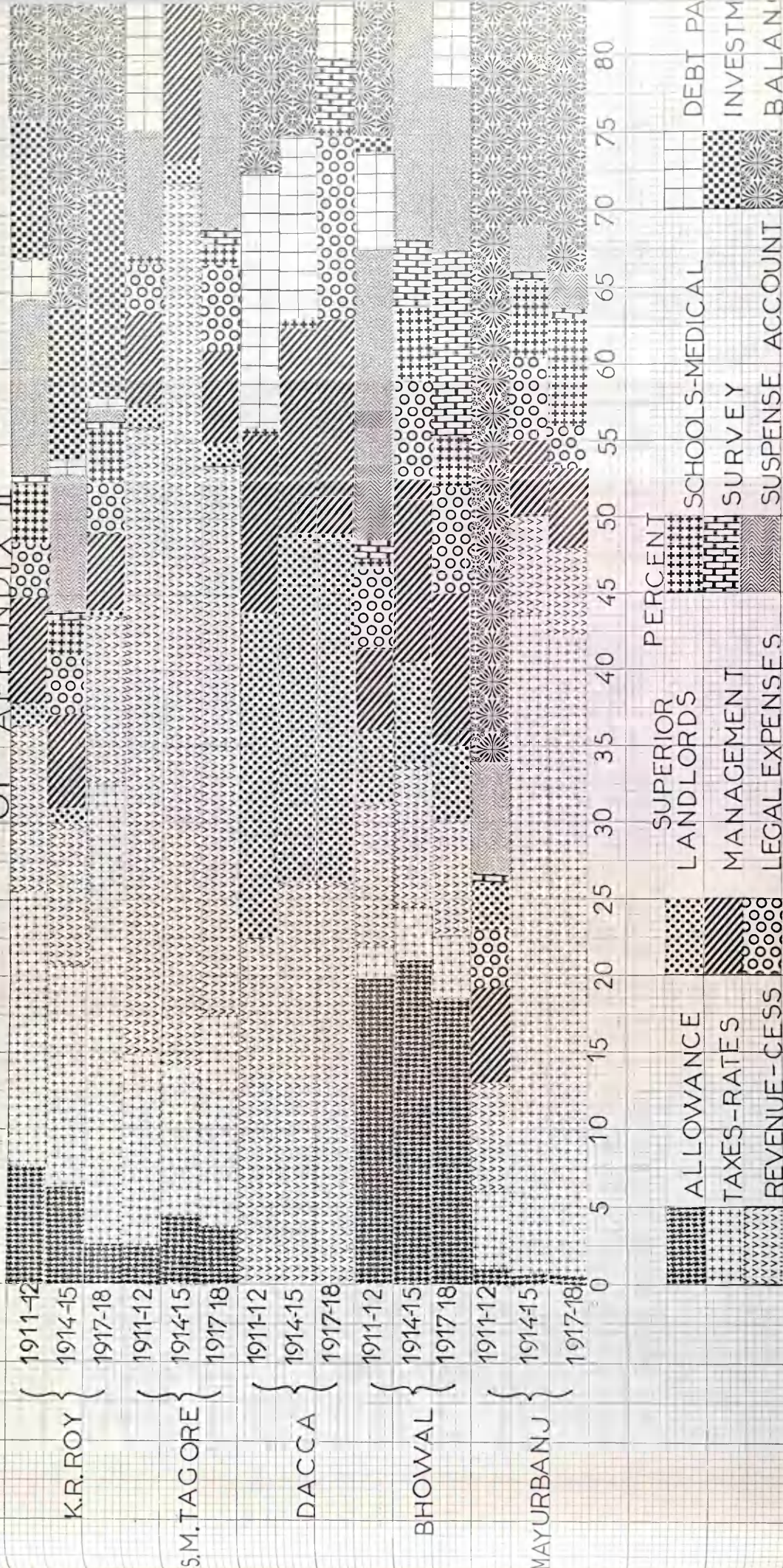
Raja Surja Kanta Guha Ray.



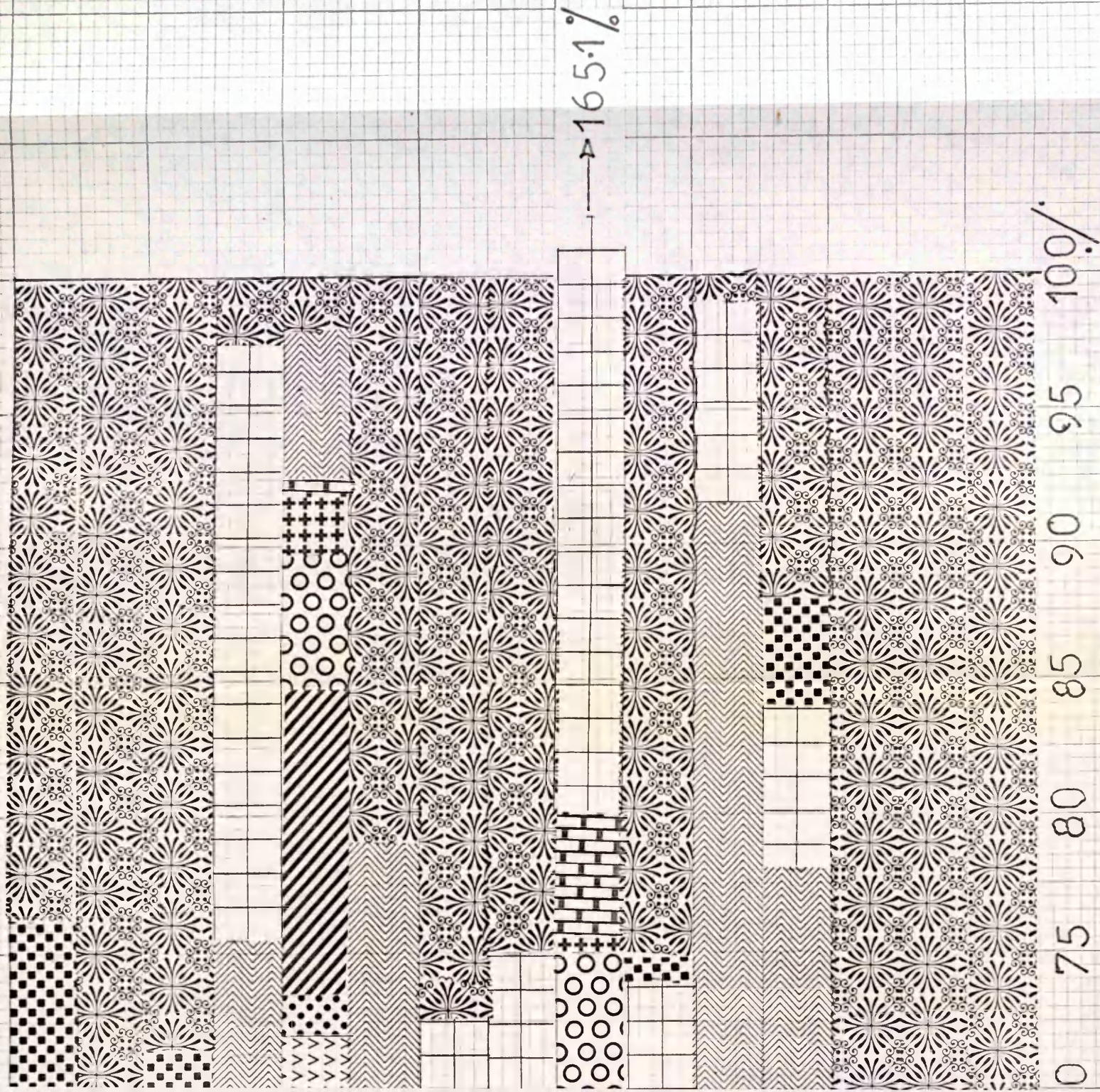
YEARS	OWNERS	DISTRICT	R E C E I P T S										D I S B U R S E M E N T S										BALANCE	REMARKS	SOURCES
			Land Revenue	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Land Revenue	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain	Grain		
1912	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	20093	40102	762	3075	156	1646	65703	521	47733	14401	544	7752	1212	699	114	1320	241	41837	23846	Minor tax of Raja Baranagar	11837	"Report on Woods' Estate 1911-12", R.P. Feb. 1913, Vol. 9154, pp. 66-73.	
1913	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	13853	23494	15046	48521	24088	9673	47322	289	12869	51149	3544	5071	18559	23478	2743	4637	184	35008	12313		1010		
1914	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	31952	49327	649	10523	2534	11142	12147	8120	36040	41424	2310	13187	2732	13191	1028	5843	184	35008	12313		1010		
1915	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	6043	93281	2014	2114	542	11182	18410	12	18910	47465	38	7512	2900	242		6539	14072	7602	35008	12313		1010	
1916	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	2488	90554	4604	1849	3099	13642	11256	6103	19057	55745	4103	11480	6771	244	30	4712	2500	11071	1765		1010		
1917	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	21777	1890		1126		2486	15010			5652	5636	10216	1152			4720		17772	70778		1010		
1918	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	32777	31682	5511	15934		12473	14497			14745	67752	33251	40577			13448	46670	1109	57400	12087		1010	
1919	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	4937	10297	4975	4027		7826	11802	1222	5400	8339	7885	4606	2814			2889		1109	80779	12087		1010	
1920	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	53245	13028		3124		754	41241		2128	18374	194	16466	24718	5093		2009		32599	36234	25327		1010	
1921	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	56242	14886		7192		5759	12312		2973	10434	6868	314070	7556	329		24232		40827	28713	31461		1010	
1922	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	10682	92421	36046	1142	4329		111203			20786	269465	35153	35116			19130		10489	100761	21232		1010	
1923	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	62935						21935											33053	33053	33053		1010	
1924	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	45523						45523											33053	33053	33053		1010	
1925	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	36750						36750											36750	36750	36750		1010	
1926	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	38143	30010	463	1490	2443	940	60946	675	24113	12374	520	5666	680	1996	135	3153			49712	11634		1010	
1927	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	316620	343179	31995	70049	2950	8311	77053	2443	131971	54597	2801	4590	45914	1249	4723	60328	1247	75050	438512	371000		1010	
1928	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	72484	108314	5697	47099	817	11592	350106	76377	24924	41444	10744	12387	7536	10162	4000	4434	34845		24737	50559		1010	
1929	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	5197	137114	3289	10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1930	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1931	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1932	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1933	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1934	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1935	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1936	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1937	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1938	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1939	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1940	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1941	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1942	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1943	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1944	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1945	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1946	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1947	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1948	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1949	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1950	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1951	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1952	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1953	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1954	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1955	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1956	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1957	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1958	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1959	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1960	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1961	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1962	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1963	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1964	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1965	K. R. Roy	Baranagar	137114	3289		10204		892	15685	6845	34806	90377	468	18742	7821	3029	1150	8818	34845		164334	2351		1010	
1966	K.																								



K.R. ROY	1911-12	
	1914-15	
	1917-18	
S. M. TAGORE	1911-12	
	1914-15	
	1917-18	
DACCA	1911-12	
	1914-15	
	1917-18	
BHOWAL	1911-12	
	1914-15	
	1917-18	
MAYURBANJ	1911-12	
	1914-15	
	1917-18	







DEBT PAYMENTS

INVESTMENTS

BALANCE

APPROX PERCENTAGES  
CALCULATED WITH A  
SLIDE - RULE



APPENDIX III.OFFICE BEARERS: POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONSI. BRITISH INDIAN ASSOCIATION.Presidents:

Maharaja of Darbhanga 1910-11

Maharaja of Burdwan 1911-19

Maharaja Tagore 1919-22

Vice-Presidents:Raja Peary Mohan Mukerjee 1910-11,  
1912-13

Maharaja of Dinajpur 1911-20

Maharaja of Nashipur 1913-14, 1916-17

Maharaja of Gidhour 1911-12

Maharaja of Kassimbazar 1910-11, 1912-13  
1914-15, 1916-17  
1918-19

Raja Gopendra Krishna Deb 1911-12

Raja Kishori Lal Goswami 1914-15,  
1917-18

Raja Kristo Das Law 1910-11

Maharaja of Susang 1912-13

Maharaja Tagore 1914-15; 1918-19

Raja of Azamgunj 1915-16

Kumar Arun Chandra of Paikpara 1917-18

Raja of Paikpara 1918-19

Maharaja of Nadia 1919-20

Raja of Dighapatia 1919-20

Raja of Santosh 1919-20

Rai Bahadur Manmatha Nath Mitter 1913-14

Sir Hariram Goenka 1910-11, 1918-19

Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath Chakravarty  
1913-14

Babu Ganesh Chandre Chandra 1912-13

Babu Damodar Das Burman 1914-15

Rai Bahadur Lalit Mohan Singh Roy 1915-16

Babu Surendra Nath Roy 1915-16

Rai Bahadur Manilal Nahar 1916-17

Sir P.C.Mitter 1916-17

Rai Bahadur Kiran Chandra Roy 1917 - 18

Secretaries:

Maharaja Tagore 1899-1912

Raja Reshee Case Law 1912-24

Treasurers:

Babu Charu Chandra Mullick 1911-16

Babu Atal Kumar Sen 1916-28

II. INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

Presidents:

Dr. Rash Behari Ghose 1909-12

Babu Ambika Charan Mazumdar 1913-16

Babu Baikuntha Nath Sen 1917-20

Vice-Presidents:

Mr. R.D. Mehta 1913

Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhuri 1906-17

Babu Debendra Chandra Ghose 1907-13

Mr. A. Chaudhuri 1908-11

Lt. Col. U.N. Mukherjee 1908-13

Babu Motilal Ghose 1912-13, 1915-18

Babu Baikuntha Nath Sen 1914-16

Babu Byomkesh Chakravarti 1914-15, 1917

Babu Bhupendranath Basu 1914-17

Mr. A. Rasul 1916-17

Babu D.P. Sarbadhikari 1918-27

Mr. B.C. Mitter 1918-28

Babu Heramba Chandra Maitra 1918-38

Babu Krishna Kumar Mitra 1918-20

Dr. Nilratan Sircar 1911-24

Secretaries:

Surendra Nath Banerjee 1885-20

Asst. Secretaries:

Dr. P.N. Banerjee 1906-13

Dr. N.C. Sen Gupta 1914-15

Sachindra Prasad Basu 1914-15, 1918-33

N.C.Roy 1915, 1917-26

Bijoy Krishna Basu 1916-17

Jitendra Lal Banerjee 1916

D.N.Basu 1918-19

D.C.Ghose 1918-23

Satish Ch. Chatterjee 1919

Hony.Treasurers:

Basanta Kumar Bose 1914-17

Kumar Arun Chandra Sinha 1918

Jatindra Nath Basu 1919-28

Lists supplied by Sec.B.I.A.

APPENDIX IV.THE FRANCHISE.I. LANDHOLDERS. (Direct Voting)

Franchise for the four zamindari seats= approx.500

## Qualifications:

1. Rajas and nawabs upwards and inclusive.

2. Revenue not less than Rs.10,000

Road cess not less than Rs.1,500

Burdwan, Presidency

3. Revenue not less than Rs.5,000

Road cess not less than Rs.1,250

Rajshahi, Dacca,  
Chittagong (alternate  
elections)

B.A.P.:1915

II. UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA. (Direct Voting)

Franchise for one University seat= 20 elected

121 nominated  
141

## Qualifications:

1. 10 elected by 583 Registered Graduates. (Ph.D., M.A., B.A.  
of 10 years.

2. 10 elected by 140 Faculties.

3. 77 nominated ordinary.

4. 10 nominated ex-officio.

5. 34 nominated honorary.

B.A.P.:1917

III. CORPORATION OF CALCUTTA. (Direct Voting)

Franchise for two Corporation seats= 35 elected

15 nominated  
50

## Qualifications:

1. 25 elected by 38,412 ward electors.

2. 4 elected by 206 members of Bengal Chamber of Commerce

3. 4 elected by 82 members of Cal. Trades Association

4. 2 elected by 16 Port Commissioners

5. 15 nominated for specialised knowledge

(38,412 Ward Electors: Over 21 years; resides or pays

municipal rates or taxes under Cal.Mun.Act and is registered in Assessment Book as owner and occupier of land or building in Cal. valued for assessment purposes for not less than Rs.150 per annum; owner of land or building so valued not less than Rs.300; occupier building so valued not less than Rs.300; licence holder under same act cost not less than Rs.25 for election year; paid preceeding election year Rs.24 rates or taxes under same act; ward elector may also be a company, corporation, or H.U.F./ 16 Port Commissioners: 1 chairman, 1 vice chairman, 5 nominee (all 7 nominated by Govt.), 6 elected by Bengal Chamber, 1 elected by Cal.Trades Asso., 1 elected by Commissioners of Cal., 1 elected by Indian firms.)

B.A.P.:1917

#### IV. DISTRICT AND LOCAL BOARDS. (Indirect Voting)

Franchise for five D. & L. Boards seats= 548 elected  
414 nominated  
 962

#### Qualifications:

1. 139 elected by 225 members D.B. & 92701<sup>1</sup> L.B. Burdwan
2. 187 elected by 247 members D.B. & 153281 L.B. Presidency
3. 124 elected by 215 members D.B. & 157072 L.B. Dacca
4. 15 elected by 47 members D.B. Chittagong
5. 63 elected by 117 members D.B. & 32859 L.B. Rajshahi
6. 414 nominated by Govt.

(Half D.B. members elected by L.Bs./ L.B.Electors: 21 year male; a member of Union Committee; paid Re.1 road cess and possessed Rs.240 annual income/ Union Committee Electors: 21 year males who paid Re.1 road cess)

B.A.P.:1917

### V. MUNICIPALITIES. (Indirect Voting)

Franchise for five municipalities seats= 840 elected  
496 nominated  
 1309

Qualifications:

- 1.238 elected by 49,923 Burdwan  
2.311 elected by 57,876 Presidency  
3.114 elected by 23,319 Dacca  
4.131 elected by 15,659 Rajshahi  
5. 46 elected by 10,006 Chittagong (alternate elections)
- (Electors: 21 year male; residence of 12 months who paid minimum aggregate of Rs.1½ for one or more of tax on persons, on houses, on carriages and horses, water rate, lighting rate, latrine tax; paid fees for cart registration; paid income tax; paid Rs.20 rent for house on which house tax has been imposed; graduates; passed 1st.Arts or I.A. or I.Sc. exams, final commercial class exams, held diploma from Govt.vernacular medical school; pleaders, muktears, revenue agents).

B.A.P. : 1917

## VI. MUSLIMS. (Direct Voting)

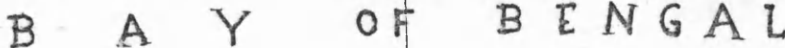
Franchise for five Muslim seats.

Qualifications:

Members of Legislative Councils; titles from Govt.;  
Fellow of Cal.Univ.; own entire or share in land which  
paid revenue of Rs.750; paid Rs.187½ of road and public  
works cess; paid income tax preceeding election year  
on Rs.6,000;received pension as gazetted or commissioned  
officer; honourary magistrate; marriage registrar; a  
barrister, and attorney, a vakil, a pleader, a medical  
man, an engineer, a graduate of 10 year standing; teacher  
of Govt. institution or affiliated to University.

B.A.F.:1911 & 1913

Rule 0 20 40 60  
MILES



Map drawn by W.Bengal  
Govt.Survey Dept.

911-19)



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